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MODERNISM AND ROMANCE

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MODERNISM AND ROMANCE

BY R. A. SCOTT-JAMES

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Two or three of the following chapters, though written in the first place for this book, and forming part of a continuous argument, have already appeared in magazines. In other chapters I have sometimes found it convenient to embody passages, much altered, originally contributed to periodicals. My thanks are due to the editors of the *Contemporary Review*, the *Daily News*, and the *Nation* (*Speaker*) for permission to reprint.

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R. A. Scott-James.

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INTRODUCTION

It may be well to explain at the outset that the first word of my title does not bear the special theological meaning which it has lately acquired. Theologians have a knack of appropriating words and destroying their value for all other purposes than their own. Religious controversy, though a large part of civilisation, is fortunately not the whole of it; and there are characteristics of modern life in general which can only be summed up, as Mr. Thomas Hardy and others have summed them up, by the word *modernism*. The hybrid may not be very pleasant to delicate ears, but perhaps what it expresses is not a very pleasant thing. In the "Battle of the Books" it was Momus who was "patron of the Moderns"; and Momus is seldom a champion of euphonious language.

I need scarcely say that I have realised to the full the temerity of devoting a whole book to the discussion of living authors. There was a time when it would have been regarded almost as a breach of decorum to treat your contemporaries with such scant reserve. Even when it was held legitimate to

dissect them in conversation, to lampoon them in periodicals, and to praise or denounce them from the platform, to make them the subject of so serious a thing as a book, otherwise than in the veiled form of satire, was to commit the unpardonable sin against taste. And it must be admitted there were plausible reasons for this view. Those were days when to enshrine your opinions within solid leather covers was to make a pretentious bid for immortality. Whilst the effusions of the journalist were seldom intended to survive the month, week, or day in which they were born, the mere paper and bindings flourished by the publisher of books were almost as enduring as bronze. Even to-day, when books are as short-lived as magazine articles, we have seen that to lavish unstinted eulogy on a living author is probably to declare yourself servile, just as to denounce him is to lay yourself open to a charge of envy or spite. We are still told that it is impossible to form a final opinion about a writer until he can be seen under the perspective of distance; that, brought up as we are in the same atmosphere which he breathes, we are disqualified from judging his true merits or defects.

Yet it is strange that this view should ever have been generally accepted, and probably it only was accepted when literature fell into the hands of sophisticated or timorous people. Can we be so vain as to suppose that we appreciate Æschylus as well as the Greeks who witnessed his tragedies, or that we

understand Shakespeare better than the Elizabethans understood him? And in the same way is it not a mockery of modesty to assert that we have less right to judge our own contemporaries, being as we are bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh, than a diffident posterity? For the writers of our time are influenced by the prevalent thoughts and feelings which move us, so that though we know nothing of their value for posterity we have the best means of knowing their value for ourselves. No doubt there are a few great authors who through some accident of circumstance never become known to their own age; and others who, living apart in some world of their own, cannot properly be said to have belonged to that age—such a man as William Blake, who is better understood now than he was a hundred years ago. But the writers who are stimulated by the characteristic forces of their time must make their most direct, their most cogent, appeal to their contemporaries.

On the other hand, it is easy to make mistakes about the men who are alive with us. We are apt to be led away by the echo of our own sentiments, which have not yet been stigmatised as platitudes, and to ignore the hard sayings, which have not yet been recognised as wisdom. But if criticism is difficult, surely that is the very reason why it should exist. It is not less important to try and find out the value of books about which opinion is still unformed than to dwell upon the value of books about

which men of culture are in the main agreed. We are all intimately touched by those floating ideas which constitute our own life and are reflected in modern literature; they are the ideas about which, however provisionally, however imperfectly, we are bound to make up our minds. We cannot help pondering upon the significant movements of thought—or lack of thought—which are making us what we are and are determining the direction of our life and art.

The pages which follow are not primarily critiques of books. They represent an attempt to disentangle some of the distinctive ideas and habits of thought which are "in the air," which are affecting all of us in our lives and our outlook upon life. They assume that each succeeding generation, like each succeeding period of life, has its own peculiar character, and that this character manifests itself in all literature, good and bad; and they assume that modern literature as a whole is a true reflection of the community which produces it. Thus I have selected various authors and books as examples of certain intellectual or emotional forces which are working in our midst and are moulding the psychical organism of society. I have as a rule kept to English and American writers, discussing only one or two books of a foreign language which make a peculiar appeal to Englishmen. Otherwise I have taken all sorts of examples, not by any means only from works of high literary merit, for each book is important for my purpose just so far as it illustrates

something characteristic in modern thought. It would have been equally foreign to my purpose to have attempted to be exhaustive.

On the contrary, I am afraid my choice may seem outrageously arbitrary. Why, it may be asked, have I spoken of Miss Marie Corelli and Mrs. Thurston as examples of the "popular" authors when I have said nothing about Mr. Hall Caine? To that I can merely reply that the works of these two authoresses are more extreme instances of what I mean than the work of Mr. Caine. And again it may be asked, why have I put Mr. Galsworthy in the class which I have named "Borderlanders"? And I must be content to reply, with much misgiving, that in spite of all the differences which separate him from other authors in that group, he often reveals, in spite of himself, perhaps without knowing it, qualities which he shares with them.

There are sure to be serious objections on the score of omission. How can you venture to speak of contemporary literature *en masse* with scarcely a mention of the name of Mr. Rudyard Kipling? I have designedly omitted him because I am chiefly speaking of authors who are not only, as Mr. Kipling once was, a vital, moving force among us, but who are themselves moved, as he is not, by the spirit operative among us to this day. I cannot but feel that, young as he is, he has done his work; that there is nothing in the new age which stirs him, nothing which compels him to speak with

his old convincing vehemence. Like Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, he lived as a force among us in the nineties; he belonged to the restless, ambitious, "imperial" age which flung us with exultation into the South African War; but his genius began to perish from exhaustion and inanition when he found himself in the wholly different atmosphere of the twentieth century. The man belongs to the moment, and the moment has passed for Mr. Kipling, whose magic seems to have rested on a faculty for apprehending one, and only one, phase of the national temper. I, like many others, have been brought under his spell and have thrilled to his stirring ballads and whimsical, tragic stories. If we would not have been without him, we may still hold that it redounds to his honour that he has chosen to be silent now.

Perhaps it will not be thought a heinous omission that I have passed over the work of Mr. Bernard Shaw, for hundreds of able people have expressed their opinion about it in print, and almost every one seems to have made up his mind, one way or the other, about this astonishing chameleon of literature. I feel it would be presumption on my part to add to what has already been written on the subject. What need is there that any one at this stage should get up and try to criticise his works when he himself has so voluminously reviewed, computed, commentated and standardised the Shavian Opera Omnia? The most daring of us might well shrink from the

Herculean task—there is so much that is baffling in these delightful books and plays. I recognise that, like Socrates, Mr. Shaw is a sort of gadfly whose business it is to harass and stir up his fellow citizens; but whilst I am often able to understand the tenets and dogmas which he questions or denies, I find it more difficult to grasp the propositions which he asserts. I have sometimes had a suspicion that he is to the present sensationally scientific age what Oscar Wilde was to the recent æsthetic culture. Sometimes he seems to be the living embodiment of the vast pseudo-scientific, self-conscious Interrogatory which will be discussed in the pages which follow. In that sense he is the very spirit and essence of the early twentieth century sublimed into its own *reductio ad absurdum*; whence it follows that he is the subject of three-fourths of this book, though his name may not be mentioned twice. Has he not himself confessed that his life is the history of the last century?

I have not said much about Mr. Gilbert Chesterton, though I think I could have said a good deal, inadequate though it would be. In this case I can only plead unwillingness to write about one whose conversation may have biassed me too much in favour of his works. I have preferred to quote him; and perhaps it would have been well had I quoted him more.

Among the younger men there are several concerning whom I was tempted to prophesy what I

believe. But prophecy is a vain pursuit which generally recoils upon the prophet to his own discomfiture. So I have resisted the temptation.

There is one book, Mr. W. H. Hudson's "A Crystal Age," which, had I read it earlier, I should certainly have spoken of in the chapter entitled "The Borderlanders." Though this fantasy was written many years ago, it is only recently that I have read it for the first time. I take this opportunity of quoting a passage which bears upon almost all that I shall have to say.

> We know that in the past men sought after knowledge of various kinds, asking not whether it was for good or for evil: but every offence of the mind and the body has its appropriate reward; and while their knowledge grew apace, that better knowledge and discrimination which the Father gives to every living soul, both in man and beast, was taken from them. Thus by increasing their riches they were made poorer; and, like one who, forgetting the limits that are set to his faculties, gazes steadfastly on the sun, by seeing much they became afflicted with blindness. But they knew not their poverty and blindness, and were not satisfied; but were like shipwrecked men on a lonely and barren rock in the midst of the sea, who are consumed with thirst, and drink of no sweet spring, but of the bitter wave, and thirst, and drink again, until madness possesses their brains, and death releases them from their misery. Thus did they thirst, and drink again, and were crazed; being inflamed with the desire to learn the secrets of nature, hesitating not to dip their hands in blood, seeking in the living tissues of animals for the hidden springs of life. For in their madness they hoped by knowledge to gain absolute dominion over nature, thereby taking from the Father of the world his prerogative.

WHAT IS ROMANCE?

MODERNISM AND ROMANCE

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS ROMANCE?

THE question which heads this introductory chapter illustrates the almost insurmountable difficulty of expressing simple ideas in language. External facts and events, the things which we can touch and see, are easily denoted by precise and definite terms; but language is baffled when we attempt to name the facts of emotional experience, the infinite varieties of pride, pity, fear, love, hate, envy, exaltation, illumination and other nameless things which we feel. As there are many cries and sounds which lie beyond the limits of the alphabet, so there are an infinity of experiences which defy the power of language. To convey a given idea we must often have recourse to words which have been used for other purposes, and must seek to explain in what sense we depart from the ordinary usage. This is my apology for first extending and then specialising the meaning of the word "romance."

It is one of those terms which have been used

in so many senses that the writer is perhaps justified in choosing whichever of these meanings he may prefer. In the present case it is not intended to bear its early meaning, as in the "Romaunt of the Rose," nor that of romance as applied to a particular kind of novel, generally melodramatic. I am thinking rather of "romance" as Joseph Conrad meant it when he made it the title of a book; or as Stevenson meant it when he said, "I have been after an adventure all my life, a fine dispassionate adventure"; as we all mean it when suddenly a thought, an action, the gleam of a moment makes us leap to our feet as at a vision, as at the promise of some instant fulfilment of life. What if it never is fulfilled if we may but stand upon the verge and scan the untravelled infinite beyond? If that is romance, who would not give all to probe to the core its mystery and its enticement?

It is this which many all through their lives have sighed for and made the object of a chivalrous quest. It is this which most of us have desired at those rare times when we have been most perfectly ourselves, when we are no longer set upon profit or loss, when we are not seeking to escape discomfort and pain, nor planning, shaping and scheming in the "practical" manner of the world. To be lifted beyond the appalling sense of our own weakness, yet to remain human, is to experience that romance which lures to quests and adventures, to hopes and bolder actions.

Most people, I believe, retain in their memory a few vivid pictures of moments or situations every incident of which has by some chance become impressed for ever upon the mind. I can well remember the picture of a radiant, sunlit beach, in a distant, the most distant, peninsula of England. I was young, and rested on the sand uncritically content with sea and sky and rocks, which suddenly seemed to have infinite, ecstatic possibilities. The sand became more yellow than any visible yellow I had seen; the sea stretched out with inimitable blueness to the rim of the horizon, meeting there the paler blue of the cloud-flecked sky. Nor can I forget the disfigurement of cast-up seaweed, dank, musty, with its strange putrid savour rising in almost visible mist before the eyes; and the line of engulfing cliffs which shut in the land and the cove and half the horizon. These things which fill the picture are but the husk and shell of the sudden inward sense which struck into the mind. I fancied some impudent onlooker gazing with blank demeanour at the sea-serpent which rose from the depths to devour him. I saw a pirate ship landing its boat to deposit in a cave a precious burden of stolen gold. Fickle to each idea, I beheld a Druid assembly come down from the sacred cairn hard by to watch the wreckage of heathen ships. Thus idly I pictured wonders and fancies behind wonders, till the images failed and the sight became dull, and I knew that this was only a dream of reality, itself hollow, unsubstantial, unreal.

Perhaps I shall be told that it is not romance, but religion, which lures us on towards the mysterious infinite and lifts us beyond the sense of our own weakness. I have no quarrel with such an objection, for surely every religion must either have its romance, as I have used the term, or be condemned as a meaningless, conventionalised series of rites. I do not mean that it is a synonym for romance. When Nuñez de Balboa gazed upon the Pacific he did not know what was beyond; he stood on the verge of the unknown, and poets have exclaimed at the transcendent wonder of the scene. And so in romance, one stands ecstatically upon the verge, no matter what the end may be; and even the religious mystics of the Middle Ages saw in their visions from God no more than suggestions of the eternal. Theologies may be concerned with Ends, and those Ends may be various; religions are concerned with means to the beginning of an End set before them by theology; and those means may be various. But the illuming ecstatic moment which marks the beginning of an End is the same for all religions; and it is the same in art as in religion, in life as in art. It is a state of mind which supervenes, not a set of beliefs or principles; it is illumination after darkness, the spiritual element in the setting forth upon a journey, the keener perception which brings the knowledge that there is more to be known and felt, that there is reality behind the symbol. It is that sense of a beginning which I call romance.

The great fact about all romantic experience is that

we never get beyond the beginning. I have spoken of those "moments" of vision which seem to promise "some instant fulfilment of life." Yet the complete fulfilment never comes; we drop back again into the ordinary, and wonder how some set of mere things or outward events should ever have seemed more than things and events; or if we are of a speculative frame of mind we are content to pronounce upon the mystery of those relations which bind things together, or of those qualities in things and in us which cause some arrangements of matter to call forth emotions and passions while others leave us cold. The upshot is that feeling gives place to thought, and there is a sense of loss, until perhaps the very stress of thought stimulates a new passion like that which Plato attributed to the pursuit of philosophy.

Perhaps I have stretched a little the meaning of romance; yet its essence, present under different forms which often surely have little to do with "mysticism," is that which underlies all good fiction, poetry, music, painting and the fine feeling inseparable from art. All artists have desired that that moment of perception should be eternal; all have found it fleeting. But though the mood itself is fleeting, that which is experienced lies outside time, and so is eternal. This is what is really meant by the phrase *Ars longa, brevis vita.* This is what Keats meant in his "Ode to a Grecian Urn;" and Browning too in his "Abt Vogler," though he added something more from his own theology:

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared ;
Gone ! and the good tears start, the praises that come too slow ;
. . . . .
All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist ;
Not its semblance but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

It is the future tense in these last four lines which has often roused in me a feeling of resentment. That "shall exist" is too much like the Sunday school conception of Paradise ; it must either be "does exist" or nothing ; it must be the infinite which it is the business of life to touch at the greatest number of points.

The object of my inquiry was expressed in terms of that romance which lures us on to quests and adventures. It may be conceived under the ideal of a Grail seen by the perfect knight in a vision, or of a consummation of experience such as that for which Goethe's Faust offered to barter his soul :

When thus I hail the Moment flying :
"Ah, still delay—thou art so fair !"
Then bind me in thy bonds undying,
My final ruin then declare !
Then let the death-bell chime the token,
Then art thou from thy service free !
The clock may stop, the hand be broken,
Then time be finished unto me !

The salvation of Faust came at the moment when the vision and the fulfilment of an End were one and the same thing. But romance as I have attempted

to define it is realised when vision carries us to the brink of knowledge though it cannot carry us beyond; and so the romantic element in Faust is that in which he moves on from adventure to adventure propelled ever by the conception of a moment when vision is to pass into realised knowledge; the thrill of each adventure becomes the more intense because in Goethe's poem there is always, beyond, the eternal thrill which cannot be affected by the human conception of time.

If we had knowledge and absolute certainty there could be no such thing as romance for us. If science held absolute sway, if we were not for ever skirting the perilous edge of the unknown, we should never be disappointed and we should never hope. Or if our art should be, not merely "realistic," but so perfectly realistic as to leave nothing unsaid or unpainted, then, like anatomy, it might be an examination of fact, but it would not be a revelation of any truth but that which is conveyed in the dullest acts of sensation; it would have no relation to meaning; it would not appeal to that occult faculty in ourselves which apprehends more than our intellect can understand, which takes us, as the common phrase has it, "out of ourselves." Magnificent uncertainty is essential to the romantic atmosphere; the intellect must leave things undefined in order that imagination may define them, that the consciousness which lurks behind consciousness may hint at the wonders behind the known.

How easily one is carried on in such a discussion as this, and with what a sense of futility one lays down the pen! For if one does not already know of oneself that of which I have been speaking, then no speaking of it will make it clear. It is just in the same way that writers are wont to condemn certain popular literature; those people who cannot already feel, because of their own inner sense, that such literature is weak and inadequate, whilst certain other literature is effective and true, will never really understand the force of criticism. They will either stigmatise it as didactic or interpret it as it was never meant to be interpreted, in terms of their own limited understanding. I can remember an extraordinary person whose intellect was more remarkable than his imagination, who conducted me round a beautiful stretch of country in the West of England. He pointed out to me attractive groupings of trees, picturesque situations of cottages, the pleasant moulding of the hills, and the gorgeous colouring of a sunset; and I remember that all his remarks were perfectly true, and that it was impossible to take exception to any of his criticisms. At the same time I knew that he said these things by rote; that he had learnt to recognise without fail a "picturesque cottage" when he saw it, or a good blend of colours in the sky which he would rightly term gorgeous, without attaching the least real personal meaning to "picturesque," "gorgeous," and other terms which are so often over-used. He had learnt to recognise

certain symbols, but he did not know *what they were symbols of.* He knew the names given to these symbols by people who did know their meanings, but the meanings were non-existent for him. By mere cleverness, without an atom of *knowledge*, he was able to name perfectly correctly those concrete, yet symbolic objects—to name them even in terms of those wonderful meanings of which they were symbols.

It is the function of great romance to call out these meanings for those who have the power to apprehend them, to carry us through a transfigured world. A nation can only be great artistically when this function is being exercised to the utmost.

It must not be thought that in these few paragraphs I have attempted to answer the unanswerable question, "What is romance?" The whole of life, perhaps the whole of existence, would fail to give an exhaustive definition. At the most I have attempted to hint at the sense in which I wish my use of the term to be understood, relying on the experience and perception of the reader to supply the rest. Those who feel with me in this matter will see at once that the word is not used in opposition to *realism.* On the contrary, the realism of some of the great Russian and French novelists brings with it that profound sense of the significance and mystery of life which satisfies the deeper romantic instinct. There are too many technical oppositions and contrasts, which often tend to obscure the underlying bond of

sympathy uniting all whose spirits have been "touched to fine issues." Does not half the value of drawing distinctions lie in the fact that it helps us to see the deeper qualities which men or things have in common? Somewhat arbitrarily perhaps I am using the word *romance* to express a certain attitude towards life. But that attitude, or method of approach, or atmosphere, is a fact which we can more profitably refer to experience than to the dictionary; and if I am wrong in selecting this term I shall gratefully adopt any other which can be shown to be more fitting.

CHAPTER II

THE DEMOCRACY OF LETTERS

MODERN literary criticism no longer reflects the dominant influence of Matthew Arnold as it did twenty or even ten years ago. Often as his principles are stated, they are but seldom put into practice; and the reason of this is not merely that what was criticism in Arnold has become the jargon of second-rate reviewers, but that criticism, even good criticism, cannot possibly be confined to the limits he gave it. When he defined it as "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world" he was nobly conforming to his own standard of "high seriousness," but did not give a definition which would satisfy all requirements. For surely you cannot possibly know the best until you know something also of the worst; yet Arnold distinctly stated that the mass of current English literature was "so much better disregarded." This may be true for the "mere man of letters," if such a being exists, but the student of life might as well agree to ignore the meaner sides of human nature—a course commonly allowed only in the schemes of Utopians. Let us

suppose that we are primarily interested, not in literature, but in life ; and suppose that we are so bold as to discuss, not the life of the ancient Chaldeans or the modern Todas, but the life of our own time and race ; then, I imagine, we are bound to take into account the main types of current literature, which is a manifestation of life, and to consider not only that which is destined to live for all time, but also the decadent, the unhealthy, and the feeble. In doing so we may or may not be allowed the high-sounding title of critics—and perhaps that does not matter—but at least we may escape the scathing contempt of those in authority.

If it were possible in modern times to make a complete estimate of the literature of a period, we should have an almost complete reflection of the thought and sentiment of that period. I say "in modern times," for it is only now, when reading and writing and scraps of knowledge are open to all, that every class of the community both reads and is represented in literature. In the Middle Ages the art of writing was almost confined to Churchmen, and the life of the people was more truly reflected in folk-tales and ballads which have been lost for ever than in the written works of the schoolmen. In the Elizabethan age English literature for the first time became catholic, and though it did not often *describe* contemporary life, it expressed the thought and sentiment of the period. And because it was spontaneous it was also full and

abundant just where the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were meagre. Their meagreness was due to the fact that men no longer wrote out of pure ebullience of spirit, but had begun to reflect upon forms of expression and forms of thought, though they had not yet come to reflect upon the human consciousness which animates all expression and all thought. Thus we may see a common characteristic in such diverse writers as Cowley and Hobbes, Pope, Addison, and Locke. At length the Lake poets, in taking us to Nature, took us also to the human soul. As Kant swept away at one stroke the dependence of thought upon matter, and left the individual supreme within his circle of consciousness, so the new poets and the novelists who succeeded them obliterated the arbitrary canons imposed upon art, and clamoured only for a just expression of life.

With the progress of the nineteenth century we come nearer and nearer to a time when everything that touches human life and thought is considered fit material for art. At the outset this emancipation of literature produced some of the greatest poets and novelists that Great Britain can boast. Dickens, Thackeray and George Eliot shone under the impulse of intellectual freedom. Carlyle and Browning belong to the same movement. On the one hand was the freedom of idealism, on the other hand the freedom of universal knowledge, of interest in and power over man, nature, and things. In more recent

times this freedom has tended to pass into licence. *Nihil humani alienum a me puto* has come to be a commonplace mouthed by every journalist. Realism and Impressionism flourish side by side; Materialism and Idealism jostle one another on friendly terms in the market-place; Science and Dogma enter into amicable rivalry or lie down together like wolf and lamb. In this twentieth century we find that every class of things, every sphere of life, every phase of thought, every branch of knowledge has its corresponding votaries in literature. The sons of the unemployed no less than "scions of the nobility" have their own champions in the fraternity of letters. No single thing in which a considerable number of people take interest is without its special literature. Every class of persons and of things, every typical sentiment and cynicism, is represented in that chaotic and widely dispersed body of writers who produce the books and journals of to-day. If our politicians have failed to create a true political democracy, at least the democracy of letters has become an accomplished fact. Not all citizens care to exercise their vote, and still fewer get what they vote for. But every person reads printed matter of some sort, and, seeing that books and papers have become cheap, and that every kind of literature has been or is being produced, he gets what he wants, good or bad, beautiful or ugly. The example of America alone would show that we cannot judge a modern country by its politicians and rulers, but we should not go

far wrong if we judged it by the books it produces and the books it reads. The literature of to-day is a reflection of the thought and sentiment of to-day. The true modern democracy is the democracy of letters.

Who is there that really keeps abreast even of the leading books produced by contemporaries without being confused by the sheer mass and multitude of the works that pour from the Press? When we remember that hundreds of earnest but scantily equipped writers, all equally afflicted with *cacoethes scribendi*, issue incessantly their voluminous works, and are often appreciated by armies of hungry and therefore unexacting readers, it is no wonder that the critical person condemns modern English literature as unworthy of our traditions. Not unnaturally he repeats the above-quoted dictum of Matthew Arnold, that the mass of current English literature is "so much better disregarded." And yet it cannot be disregarded: it must be sifted, if the best is to be discovered; and if furthermore we are interested in the national activity or unrest which throws off so much undigested matter, we must study types even of the inferior literature before we can understand the stage through which we are passing, the thoughts and feelings which are making for growth or decay. The least meritorious book is often valuable as a symptom. We have to diagnose cases of disease before we can understand the conditions of health. It may be that in the course of our inquiries we shall find some

common underlying principles, or even that we may discover a new force born of some rare union of qualities.

It may seem a truism to assert the dominance of science in the modern world, but it must be remarked that the scientific spirit has permeated spheres of life where its presence would be least expected. We expect to find its influence in trade and industry, for it has been the further application of science to industry which has continued the great Industrial Revolution of a hundred years ago. And we expect to find the study of it figuring largely in the curricula of schools, for most of the so-called bread-winning occupations are based upon methods and mechanisms devised by scientists. Nor are we surprised at the reverence shown for those abstract studies which by certain and irrefragable methods of observation, induction and verification reveal the nature of the physical universe, so that diseases can be cured, the lightning captured, and the courses of the stars foretold. Nor is it surprising that other inquirers, seeing that science alone can claim the absolute certainty of proof, without possibility of error, should adopt what has come to be known as the "Scientific Method." There is a scientific method of history, a scientific method in literary scholarship; and theology itself, the ancient enemy of science, has admitted its methods in the "Higher Criticism." I need not dwell upon the far-reaching influence of the evolutionary principles which had their origin in the scientific treatises

of Darwin and Wallace, nor the fact that writers on ethics ask whether ethics is or is not to be regarded as a science. The most fruitful union of philosophy and science has been the study of psychology, which has turned the inquirer from the external objects of nature to the internal phenomena of soul.

Upon this last point I shall have something more to say, but we must first notice how the scientific spirit has intruded where its right to exist is most open to question. It has thrust itself into regions where faith, or superstition, or sentiment once held undisputed sway. In the religious meaning of the term, faith implied a knowledge which rested upon intuition and did not admit of proof; and the object of faith was spiritual rather than physical. Nevertheless many champions of so-called rationalism have impugned religion because it does not rest upon a scientific basis.

In the same way, there is no place for pagan superstition where nothing exists or appears which cannot be scientifically interpreted; nor is there room for that finer sentiment which rests upon feelings and activities not to be explained in terms of cause and effect. Mere reason and mere fact have become dominant in the twentieth century. We build great suspension bridges, we invent motors and flying-machines, we organise trades and deal in elaborate statistics, and are beginning to introduce moral science with pomp and circumstance into our mechanical systems of education. Incredulity, or canniness, is

the most noticeable quality even of the "man in the street." If he goes to the theatre he will not let himself be emotionally convinced that one of Mr. Beerbohm Tree's kings or heroes is a real king or hero, without ocular evidence of a palace, or a troop of soldiers, or other trappings of herodom actually presented on the stage. If he reads a novel he is not content unless he is told the "reason why" of everything that happens. It is true, these remote traces of the scientific spirit are no more than ludicrous parodies of the real thing, and they often have the most unscientific results. The passion for knowledge in this debased form becomes a passion for the latest item of "news," for anything and everything curious and sensational which is said to have happened, and which, being often contrary to ordinary experience, requires a fresh effort of the scientist to reconcile it with the idea of a self-consistent universe. Not long before these words were written we had an extraordinary instance of this in the popular enthusiasm with which the *Zancigs*, who claimed to communicate with each other by telepathy, were received at a London music-hall and exploited in a popular halfpenny newspaper. The practice of telepathy, being contrary to experience as most people know it, afforded a fresh problem for science to solve, a new fact to be subsumed under natural laws. A more imaginative age would have been no more amazed by an example of telepathy than by an example of falling in love; it would have merely

added it to the myriads of miracles, and passed on. We, however, are only surprised because we have not explained it already.

The modern interest in psychology has been alluded to. It was inevitable that when experimental science was laying its finger upon every branch of modern study it should turn its attention to the most important of all things, the human soul, the consciousness. In setting out to know everything, we have sought also to know ourselves, though not always according to the meaning of the old Greek maxim. Metaphysics, being outside the ken of the scientist, has passed out of fashion, except in the ancient universities and among those perennially fresh minds which cherish bright dreams of discovering truth in the Absolute. We no longer, amid the contemplation of "all time and all existence," ask what is the nature of the soul in itself, but follow in the path pointed out by science, recording the moods and manners of the soul as they can be observed, as if to capture fugitive reality with camera and note-book. Realism in literature has been only one among many symptoms of the modern psychology—which registers exact facts about human beings, and stores them up with a view to their possible bearing upon scientific theory. And in the psychological novel the writer traces already discovered principles, and works out details of mind and character in pages of elaborate description. Science has united itself to the study of human nature and given birth to the psychological novel.

But these are far from being the only results of the psychological method. It has set us thinking about ourselves and doubting everything—in a word, we have become self-conscious. This may be a weakness or it may be a strength. In some cases the "affected" person is produced; sometimes the strong man who realises responsibilities; sometimes the true well-doer; sometimes the vain, ostentatious philanthropist whose virtue is the least of his rewards. The intelligent man who lives in London cannot help puzzling as to what it means to be a man who lives in London; if he lives in the country, he wonders what is or ought to be the temperamental effect of the country. If he is an artist, he is thinking of himself, the individual, in relation to his own art, being apt to regard the latter not as an expression of the beautiful, but as an expression of himself. The novelist thinks of other people and of himself from the inside, so that the reader is left wondering what he may be thinking about his characters rather than what his characters really are.

To this self-consciousness in literature may be ascribed the fact that the old fixed canons of taste have lost their validity. If the main business of a writer is, not to portray the beautiful, but to reveal himself in his treatment of life, then there must tend to be as many standards of taste and of excellence as there are writers. Modern literature is essentially individualistic. The dramatist refuses to be bound by the laws of place and time, the novelist ignores

the earlier conventions of plot, the writer of every class eschews authority in vocabulary, literary structure, and orthodoxy of opinion. It is seldom held that art is an idealised and objective expression of reality, and still less often that it should be beautiful; but rather that it is an exact expression of personality, no matter how whimsical, grotesque, or even deformed that personality may be. Each man is his own standard; each is a canon and measure to himself; the great critics are esteemed and ignored. The air resounds with a magnificent roar of clamorous opinions, which testify to the chaotic freedom of authorship, the democracy of letters.

. . . . .

To sum up briefly the foregoing conclusions. For the student of books and human nature it is worth while to examine all types of modern literature, good and bad, because in modern times especially, when every one reads and is written for, literature is a criterion of modern life. The two inquiries must go together—What are the main forces in modern life? What are the main forces in modern literature? The most remarkable feature of the new era has been the progress of science and invention, and the intrusion of the scientific and positive spirit into every field of modern thought, till it has even plundered the sanctuary of imagination and religious belief. It has encouraged materialism, and the tacit assumption that everything can or ought to be explained in terms of the law of cause and effect just as things can be

explained in chemistry or physics. It has developed the habit of analysis. We have examined and analysed religion, and we have examined and analysed our own minds. Writers have become self-conscious; the age has become self-conscious. Consequently there has been evident an intensely personal note in art and criticism, and a contemptuous deviation from earlier artistic standards due to the fact that each artist, being intent primarily on showing and explaining himself, abandons all other standards in favour of the personal and possibly the capricious.

CHAPTER III

THE BORDERLAND

"ART for art's sake" could only have become a proverb when its meaning was already dead. The sheer delight in loveliness as an end in itself has no place in the twentieth century. There have been those who have cared for nothing so much as the beauty of a line or a curve; who have put their soul into perfection of phrase and cadence; who have found that things, persons and forms are lovely because they are what they are and therefore are lovely. The cloud has been beautiful because it has colour and form, and it is a cloud; the nymph has the loveliness of human lines against the background of water or wood, and she is a nymph; the black ship upon the Aegean spreads its sails and has the glory of a ship. To some people the fond portrayal of the thing of beauty has been enough; their craftsmanship has been spoken of as classicism, and contrasted with that which is known as romanticism. And yet, to the Greek, art was always much more than form, and life more than matter. Behind the broad expanse of the sky he saw the mighty shape of Zeus; the sweetness of harmony and of music

could not be explained without Apollo and his lyre; and the virginal beauty of the city of Athens could not be conceived without the goddess who presided from the Acropolis. Behind all lovely things and objects of worship lay the mystery of the human form, because to the Greeks the ultimate miracle of existence was man, with all his possibilities of harmonious action, of feeling and of thought. If critics have been wont to contrast classicism with romanticism, that is not because the classics were content with mere beauty whilst the romanticists sought the added wonder of suggestion; but because they wondered in different ways. To the Greeks all miracle and all perfection lay in the ever-baffling mystery of the human person, so that if a sky or a ship or a poem seemed miraculously beautiful, it was with the miraculous beauty of a human being—and surely this was why the Greeks excelled before all things in sculpture. But the romanticist, wearied of human nature and perhaps disillusioned, presses on to the more distant mystery of life, and pursues further his quest of the unknown that lies behind the known. That which makes him feel is not so directly presented to the senses; if it is so presented, it is not so much the sight or the sound that pleases as something significant and obscure of which the sight or the sound is but a symbol and a hint.

But romance as I have used the term in my opening chapter is not confined to the old romaunts, nor to the works of the romanticists, nor to any

other single class of literature which has appropriated the name. It implies the state of mind in which we approach life and literature, and see the world transformed before us, so that it is intense and alive and responsive to the thrill of the soul which by its very nature cries out for more than concrete pleasures, for more than the beauty which is mere beauty of husk and shell. It is that which makes literature surpass learning, and distinguishes inspired literature from that which is merely elegant and graceful ; in life it is that which gives subtlety and fineness to the spirit so that the sensitive and apprehensive man is not in the same category as the mere man of affairs. It is not learning, or knowledge, or practical judgment, or elegance, or culture, yet when added to these it is the quality by virtue of which genius excels ability.

But the point to be specially insisted upon now is that we have here a test by which to try literature. It is not perhaps a final and absolute test by which all literature has been and must inevitably be tried ; for we have seen that we can imagine an age which found "delight in loveliness as an end in itself," to whose art, therefore, the presence or absence of a romantic quality would be no criterion ; and such an art would make no appeal to experiences hidden in the soul. But with the advent of science, metaphysics, and psychology, and the practical analogues of these studies, we have come, like Adam after the fall, into a state of knowledge which is altering our

susceptibilities and our artistic standpoints. A thing is for us no longer merely a thing; we cannot help looking for the further sense of the myriad things which lie behind it, and this again leads us to a deeper mystery which defies solution. Here, perhaps, is the explanation of the weakness and tawdriness of modern decorative art, that there is nothing in merely decorative art which can satisfy the deeper craving, so that those who pursue it do so too often mechanically, without enthusiasm, and merely in accordance with tradition. It is no longer the man of science and the metaphysician only who seek for causes; the tendency to seek for causes has been popularised, and the mind becomes more and more unsatisfied just in proportion as physical science continues to explain some things in terms of others. The man of letters or the artist can only hope to succeed, in the higher sense of the term, according as he probes beyond and behind the visible world of fact, and touches the mysterious springs of personality and soul, carrying us on into a world of spiritual adventure.

This is what I mean by saying that romance, spiritual romance, becomes a test by which we may try art and literature. It enables us to see why most of us must be less satisfied by the poetry of Pope than that of Wordsworth or Browning; or, to take the case of pictorial art, why those who may be much pleased by the paintings of such an artist as Leighton will never derive the same satisfaction and content-

ment from him as from many inferior craftsmen. Carlyle was thinking of the same quality when he spoke of "soul" or "intenseness," words which unfortunately have been vulgarised by loose usage. Nor is it sufficiently expressed by the word mysticism, sometimes used in this connection, a term which has properly a narrower meaning of its own, and stands to "romance" in the relation of species to genus.

It has already been suggested that this romance may not only be taken as the criterion of certain literature and art, but also of a certain life; and that the persons who live this life are specially needed to-day to assert the claims of untrammelled imagination against the forces of scientific and practical materialism. We need more romance just because science, in its early stage, has made romance harder. Modern literature needs more of the true romance because amid our utilitarian surroundings a greater spiritual force is needed to break through the crust of sceptical common sense. Triflers there may be in hundreds who will amuse without ever satisfying; or imitators of the old writers who fail to convince because they have not seen the uselessness of forcing new wine into old bottles; and there may be sincere persons who with the best intentions succumb to the debauching modern influence. And so the craving after a more significant life, a more significant art and literature, increases and is intensified in proportion as life and art become more insignificant in their overwhelming materialism. Our very self-conscious-

ness has made us demand a deeper consciousness. Tightly bound as we are in rules and laws, we are obeying a true impulse when we reject old standards and permit the caprice of individuals.

For our science, and philosophies, and inventions, and manufactures and infinite complexities have conspired to make us more discontented even if we have not actually more cause for misery. The towns were only beginning to be huge and hideous when the Lake poets urged us to seek the solace of nature, and now it seems that nature has become harder and harder to find. The country has receded and red villas and chimneys have taken its place, and even where it remains it has lost its simplicity by the invasion of townsmen with their motor-cars, their hoardings and their outlandish dress. The towns themselves have been filled with people whose eyes have been opened to the uncouthness of their surroundings, who, finding their dim aspirations unfulfilled, perforce drug themselves with spurious amusements and frantic occupations. The intellectual and artistic classes are often worse off than their less self-conscious neighbours, for they have aspirations which are harder to satisfy, and they must needs deaden the craving with artificial and noxious drugs.

The great evil of our age is that we are constantly and terribly aware of evil. We have studied modern society and we have studied ideals of good sufficiently to know the monstrous discrepancy between the two. We have come into "feelings," as Mr.

Hardy says of Tess of the D'Urbervilles, "which might almost have been called those of the age—the ache of modernism," and there is not always at hand a poet of whom we can say, as Tess says of Angel Clare, "But *you*, sir, can raise up dreams with your music, and drive all such horrid fancies away." The "Sixth Standard training" is enough, without the University, to make us conscious, self-conscious, and sceptical.

I have quoted Mr. Thomas Hardy. But of what avail is it to quote one, two, or twenty writers, when five modern books out of ten reflect this same spirit of protest against an unsatisfying world? Questioning and doubt, and the discontent which results therefrom, afford the perpetual theme of the moralist, the social reformer, the man-about-town, the artisan, and perhaps even the peasant. Mr. G. K. Chesterton has often written on this modern habit of doubt, which he contrasts with that of the old sound dogmatism.

> What is the use of our complaining that our Parliamentary leaders do not make a success of Parliament; that our Churchmen do not make a success of the Church; that even our revolutionists do not make a success of revolution? We have encouraged our Parliamentarians to doubt everything, including Parliament. We have encouraged our Churchmen to doubt everything, including the Church. We have encouraged our revolutionists to talk about evolution. We have encouraged our worldlings to doubt even the world.

Amid the groans and the protests and the feeble attempts at alleviation, the idea is being pressed in upon us that the men of the last century have brought

things to such a pass for us that the world as it is is almost intolerable. We have come to disbelieve in the success of our science, our improvements, our institutions, our civilisation, and the literature and art which builds itself up on all these. Some, of the earth, earthy, are content to acquiesce in the chaotic combination of splendour and squalor which everywhere recurs in modern life. Some hate the artificialities which it engenders, but are not vigorous enough to combat it. Some, again, seek a refuge from the tumultuous scene by turning to other atmospheres of distant times or distant places, burying their heads like ostriches in the calm of a University, or, it may be, stopping their ears to all but the refrains of ancient music, it may be flying literally or in imagination to the peoples and cities of the Orient, or the wilds where primitive people and beasts still live in reverent terror of the unknown. Some, more bold if not more imaginative, face the turmoil, "confronting," as Walt Whitman put it, "the growing arrogance of realism," attempting to check the outward symptoms without always seeing that the canker is inward and spiritual. Others there are who play with pleasant Utopian dreams, conscious of the growing evil, and expecting to avert it by agreeable ingenuities. And there are yet others, who have contracted the disease of modernism in its most virulent form, and having accepted with open eyes the grossness, the artificialities, the *fin-de-siècle* weariness, the materialism, hedonism, and all the supreme selfishness,

not only accept them but revel in them, wallow in them, soak themselves in them ; and when they are labelled "Decadents" they take it as a compliment.

It is a wearisome tale to tell, and here, as I am trying to depict something of the misfortunes of men through the misfortunes of books, I must defer the details of the one till I come to the details of the other. He is happy indeed who does not understand what I have sought to suggest rather than to explain ; for, after all, it is a matter of feeling, and if he has not felt London, Paddington, Islington, Mayfair, Wales, and Bedfordshire—as William Blake might have summed up the modern Albion—if he has not felt these and all the other parts of our over-developed community shaking and shivering in self-conscious postures, groaning in the agonies either of actual physical pain or the self-imposed torture of affectation, then he belongs to the happy few who have not been compelled to witness the "ache of modernism." But if he has witnessed it, and lived in it, and has some spark of virility in him, then from his soul he must protest against it, or fly from it, or, better still, combat and transform it in the light of a new reason and a new romance. If a man, seeing this, and living it, can still "justify the ways of God to men," then he has a spirit within him which, with a little knowledge, a little energy, a little hope, may make him the exponent of a new movement in art and literature.

And it is my contention in this work that there is in contemporary literature a force which, if it grows

and continues, will humanise and spiritualise the modern world and turn it from its despair, and that it will do so in the courageous, transcendent spirit of a romance which admits the developed consciousness, and with it travels to the threshold of the infinite. And it will do so not necessarily in the spirit of mysticism, which is often delusion, but in the spirit of wonder, fear, and reverence.

I am not, of course, suggesting that there is one and only one critical canon which should be applied to all literature and art. It is perhaps the strength of our modern literature that it reveals a generous diversity; that it contains numberless types and styles; that it imitates accurately, and occasionally strikes out a fresh and original vein. I am not suggesting that the comedy of Mr. Pett Ridge can be subjected to the same critical tests as the tragedy of Mr. Thomas Hardy, or that Miss Corelli should be asked to reveal the same qualities as Mr. Shaw or Mr. Yeats. Yet, just as we are capable of saying that each of these writers is or is not satisfying in the most complete sense of the term, so we may find it useful to name that quality in them which makes them satisfy us. We may estimate them under innumerable heads according to their respective literary merits, and consider their style, technique, teachings, significances, and individual excellences. Nevertheless, amid all diversity we may look for a common ground of excellence, as represented by their relation to what I have ventured to call "romance."

CHAPTER IV

SCIENCE AND VANDALISM

The argument has now reached a stage at which it can no longer dispense with evidence and illustration. We have so far accepted it as a fact that the rapid advance of science in its own sphere has given it a glamour through the potency of which it has invaded kingdoms not its own, and set up there its overweening tyranny. It is true the greatest of living scientists have not been guilty of this act of wanton aggression: they are either content to follow the difficult course of their own vocation without setting up a wider claim; or if they have gone beyond their professional limits, like Sir Oliver Lodge or the late Frederic Myers, they have been powerfully equipped with other weapons which are not the peculiar property of the scientist.

The greatest men, however, are seldom the typical products of their age. If the reader should seek the most convincing proofs of the religious cult of science, or pseudo-science, I would bid him go to a workmen's debating society, and hear how Darwin, Spencer and Haeckel are continually quoted and misquoted; or read the *Daily Mail*, and notice the

frequent use of terms taken from biology; or visit a music-hall, and observe how the allurements of the cinematograph prove more effective than all the enticements of the variety artist.

But here we are concerned with the somewhat higher intellectual manifestations which appear in contemporary literature. As a first illustration, therefore, I propose to take the work of a distinguished scientist, a man of wide literary interests who has achieved success as a writer. Dr. Henry Maudsley is the author of a book entitled "Life in Mind and Conduct—Studies of Organic in Human Nature."

Like Socrates, Bacon, and Kant, Dr. Maudsley comes upon the stage as one having a mission to upset the illusions of mankind, and turn them into the path of true philosophy. As Francis Bacon attacked the "dogmatics" and the "empirics" with equal intrepidity, so Dr. Maudsley throws down the glove to idealists and empiricists, to men of religion and to men of no religion, and laughs at mankind in the bulk, though he seldom particularises about names. Bacon is his hero and exemplar; Bacon is almost the only philosopher whom he ever quotes; even his style, mannerisms and cynicisms are those of the great inaugurator of the scientific method. Perhaps I may even add that just as Bacon never studied Aristotle in the original, so too Dr. Maudsley sometimes gives the impression of not having studied those authors whom he appears to be refuting.

The introductory chapter starts modestly with an invocation to Shakespeare, Solomon and Laotze, "the Chinese contemporary of Confucius"; the author protests that there is no new thing under the sun, and that it is often the last thinker, uttering ancient wisdom, who "may capture the long fame of it." Having made a preliminary objection to the "artificial divisions of knowledge into separate classes and sciences," he informs us that "mind is life, whatever more it be, growing, maturing and decaying within its fixed period, like all life." And then comes a startling assumption, important because of its place in the succeeding argument: "mind is not only life, but its particular life is demonstrably the life of the particular body in it." This queer clause seems to mean that physical life and the life of the mind are one and the same—or rather, are related to one another as genus and species. We are concerned then, not with two branches of inquiry, but with "one science which, having its root in a physiological basis, has its flowering in the mental processes of which metaphysics and psychology claim to take exclusive cognisance." Upon this assumption Dr. Maudsley rests an excuse for refusing to discuss life or morals from a metaphysical standpoint and for regarding them simply as physiological phenomena. When he laughs at "a domain of being absolutely distinct from sense-experience," we ought to remind him that he is merely exposing an error which, under the name of the theory of abstract ideas, was exposed

by Berkeley a century and a half ago ; so that his mockery is as belated as it is trivial.

The physical origin of words like Intellect, Reason, Reflection or Cogitation will not, as the author seems to think, be any true guide to their real meaning. The pathologist may be right in assuring us, as Dr. Maudsley assures us, that a certain process in the brain is indispensable to reason—and he may call it, if he likes, "the rightly proportional in-formation of mental structure and consequent just balance of function" ; but some further argument is needed to assure us that this cerebral process, or any other fact of experience, does not imply, as the condition of its existence, something else which is not itself experience, but which is capable of experiencing. In a rare vein of humour Dr. Maudsley, when he wishes to show the continuity between mind and matter, enlists Milton on his side :

> Flowers and their fruit,
> Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed,
> To vital spirits aspire.

He is very properly satirical about the vanity of man who believes himself to be the centre of the universe and its sole concern ; and charmingly discusses the bee, the cat, the dog, the monkey and the criminal. He himself conceives life as a vast organic whole, subject to physical laws, a whole in which, as in the cosmos of Heracleitus, there is a perpetual flux—a life manifesting itself always in production,

preservation, destruction, and again in reproduction. Organic life consists simply in the charging and discharging of functions, the latter taking place in the form of explosions—either regular and ordered (so that the organism has time to repair and renew itself, as in the healthy human body) or rapid and convulsive explosions :

> Earthquakes and thunderstorms, volcanic outbursts and popular revolutions, the raging of the sea and the madness of peoples, pulses of muscle and thrills of nerve alike fulfil that law. A sneeze is an explosion ; so also is a yawn, a sigh, a cough, a pang of pain . . . and at bottom every muscular contraction, every thrill of feeling, every current of thought is the cumulative effect of a regular sequence of minute explosions.

Nature's concern is to propagate, not individual life, but life. Between dead and living matter there is no break, but transition ; in the continuous evolution of matter, the dead in becoming living simply undergoes a change into new and stranger complexes.

But Dr. Maudsley unwittingly forsakes his scientific stronghold when he comes to the evolution of the conscious out of the unconscious, the thinking out of the unthinking. In the gradual development of a more delicate and complex organism, each part of which works harmoniously with the others—where there is " a sympathy of parts in response to stimulus "—there is established, he tells us, a " *consensus* or sympathy of them, and such consensus is a step on the way to *consentience* or co-feeling, which, again, at a still higher remove, becomes a *consciousness*,"

He does not ask such questions as: Where does this consciousness reside? Does it reside in all the parts or only in some of them? If only in some, is it in the leg, or in the head, or in the chest? If in all, does a man's consciousness become a different consciousness when his hand or his finger or his thumb-nail is cut off? And again, when this "organic affinity or sympathy of parts" becomes consciousness, is this consciousness itself material, or merely an attribute of matter? And if it is itself matter, do we not come to a different kind of matter from any which existed before its appearance, and add to the confusion by insisting on including it under the term material? If, on the other hand, it is not matter, but an attribute or quality of matter, we still want to understand what an attribute or quality is before we can accept the conclusion. These are questions which inevitably present themselves; but upon them Dr. Maudsley is consistently silent.

In the rest of the book he courageously applies his theory to society and to the activities and passions of its members. He coldly lays bare with his dissecting-knife the vanities and self-delusions upon which it is built up. All mankind, with its societies, governments, religions, loves, altruisms, egoisms, codes and conventions, is simply playing the monstrous game which nature has set it to play. It sets up gods and idols and kings and mysteries because it cannot help fulfilling the great plan of cosmic and social evolution. Man, starting with a self-conserving

instinct, is at length deluded into a worship of the species:

> In the end it comes simply to this—that the despotism of morality is the self-seeking of the species and the servitude of the individual, who is expected to find full compensation for his self-sacrifices in the implicit belief of its inestimable worth and the knowledge that he is ministering to its glorious destiny.

Should we be wrong if we dared to imagine that Dr. Maudsley is "at bottom" as he would say, an idealist? As he passes majestically from theme to theme, again and again reiterating his cynical creed, we feel all the time that he is laughing in his sleeve, that he too is palming off on us a glorious deceit; and that, behind his argument, he holds in reserve a different standard of truth from that which he applies. One wonders what lies behind this outburst of remorseless pessimism:

> For, as the single mortal is inspired to live and strive in hope by his illusions, finding life dreary, bitter, barren, and worthless when they are dead, so may it be at last with the race of mortals: it too may lose its illusions as it begins to die, and die when they are dead.

It is when we come to such sentences as this, wherein the soul of the author seems to express revolt and anger at that gloomy stage of thought which it is his fate to illustrate, that we are struck with wonder at the religion of the scientists and the thraldom in which it holds its votaries.

The case of a more popular but I think less

authoritative writer, Mr. J. F. Nisbet, is similar. In a book called "The Insanity of Genius" he sought to prove that the genius is born, not made, in the sense that he is born with a nervous system strongly disposed in a certain direction; that he has faculties highly developed, generally at the expense of other faculties. But in a later work, more relevant to our present purpose, "The Human Machine," his aim is to show that the human being is a mere piece of mechanism (not of course in the sense that it has been devised by a free agent). He places "mind and morals, as well as all physical faculty, upon a purely materialistic basis." The book is the work of a cultured author, who has dabbled in science and philosophy, who is versed in various arts, who introduces apt illustrations, and has a persuasive trick of plain speaking. It is, I need scarcely say, somewhat amateurish in thought and sophistical in method, but it passed into cheap editions, and by thousands of persons was accepted as a serious contribution to philosophy.

Though it is a less intrinsically important work, "The Human Machine" may very naturally be compared with Dr. Maudsley's "Life in Mind and Conduct." To the latter, truly, the metaphysician was a mere dreamer, playing games with abstractions; whereas Mr. Nisbet seems to identify him with the physicist, and therefore awards him his meed of honour. But the difference is only one of terms. Both writers agree in entirely ignoring that whole view

of life which does not start with the conception of organic matter as the prime reality. Mr. Nisbet finds that certain discoveries have been made about the nerve-cells of the brain and their relation to the body; that every form of mental, emotional, or sensuous activity is accompanied by corresponding activities in these nerve-cells; and that the former come into being, or cease to be, just in proportion as the latter are or are not operating in the proper manner. All this, if it is really the verdict of science, may be accepted as a set of definite and interesting facts; within the limits of science they may be regarded as undeniable, demonstrable truth. But the scientist insists on shutting his eyes to the fact that he has not exhausted, and cannot exhaust, the subject. To take an illustration: we may be perfectly ready to believe that the joy of a gold-digger in discovering a gold mine, or of a philosopher in upsetting a religion, is invariably accompanied by certain interdependent activities of the nerve-cells, and could not exist without them. But it is quite another thing when the scientist insists that these nerve-activities *are* joy. For whilst the nerve-activities are a mere fact, joy is a fact and something else; and what that something else may be—whether it should be known as meaning, attribute, or relation, or what not—it is not within the sphere of physical science to dictate. It is just as if a physicist, knowing that heat is produced by rubbing together two sticks, should laugh at the chemist for believing that it

could be the result of a mystical process called combustion. In estimating qualities of the mind we have come to a region where the physical scientist, *qua* physical scientist, has no right to pronounce an opinion. He can speak about the physical condition of the body accompanying thought or emotion, or under what physical conditions thought or emotion becomes impossible. But he can go no further. He has said as much as science at present is capable of telling him.

It is upon such an assumption as this that Mr. Nisbet draws up an elaborate argument for necessitarianism. Human action is the result of predisposition and response to stimulus. Deliberation and the appearance of choice are only the wavering of a mechanical balance; consciousness is only nerve-activity, which does not affect the process of so-called willing. Philanthropy and criminality are merely mental characteristics. Education does not affect character, and human responsibility is an illusion. The insane are those who are apt to hurt themselves or other people. Hence the criminal, who lacks the sympathetic faculty, is insane; the writer failing to see that this view, which professes to be based on "common sense," is as a matter of fact opposed to the common sense of the majority of mankind, who acquit a criminal when he is "insane," but condemn him when he is in the full possession of his faculties.

Like Dr. Maudsley, he closes with an outburst of pessimism against the absurdities of human reason

and human institutions. Arguments never affect our actions, and an appeal to the wisdom of the masses is absurd; for two courses of action are never open to us, and predisposition has made us insusceptible to external influences. Democracy is an expression of "the constant desire for change," due to a hope that "change will bring some remedy for the really incurable ills of human nature."

The archbishop of this religion of destructive science is the celebrated German, Ernst Haeckel. It is he who enunciates the magnificent proposition:

> Consciousness, thought and speculation are functions of the ganglionic cells of the cortex of the brain.

In Haeckel we shall find none of the half-playful cynicism of Descartes, who declared that the soul and the body are connected in the region of the spinal cord; none of the joyous scorn of Hume, when he said we know nothing but random, disconnected impressions and ideas, which perish as soon as they are born. Haeckel stands forth rather as the man who has solved the "Riddle of the Universe." "If I could find one immovable point," said Archimedes, "I could move worlds." Haeckel blatantly declares that he has found an immovable point in the "conservation of matter and energy," and from that proceeds confidently and dogmatically to the material character of the whole universe—the soul, art, religion, God, and other "functions of the ganglionic cells of the cortex of the brain."

Like most mere scientists who claim to be also philosophers, Haeckel has led astray himself and others by an argument from analogy. Physical science attains scientific certainty in the region of physical facts; it observes and experiments upon physical phenomena and formulates laws which hold good for those phenomena. But when applied to non-physical facts, to what are not strictly "phenomena" at all, the scientific laws cease to hold, and the argument is one from analogy. With Drummond "natural law in the spiritual world" was a hypothesis and a speculation. Haeckel thinks he is still in the region of scientific certainty.

There are two ways, I think, in which he may be confuted. In the first place it is possible to deny *in toto* the validity of his method. He begins with things observed and perceived, and argues from them to the faculties of the mind by which they are observed and perceived. In thus arguing from things known to that which knows he is putting the cart before the horse. Upon these lines the transcendentalist would set out to confute Haeckel. The other way is to meet him on his own ground as a scientist, and to show that he is unscientific. This method has been adopted by one of the few Englishmen capable of thus meeting him, Sir Oliver Lodge.

It is a good way, because the man in the street reveres the name of science as once he revered the name of the Holy Catholic Church. To invoke the

goddess of Reason with a specious array of difficult scientific terms, with a chain of consecutive dogmas skilfully handled, is to capture the imagination of the ignorant. To appeal to the great name of Science, it is felt, is to appeal to truth. That is why Haeckel himself has had a vast following, and has been glibly expounded by people who only half understand the scientific facts which are his starting-points.

Sir Oliver Lodge has this in common with Haeckel, that he thinks life, consciousness, affection, &c., may one day be the objects of scientific knowledge. But he denies that they are so at present. His complaint is that Haeckel has invoked the name of science, and has resorted to speculation; whilst he does not object to speculation as such, he does object to calling it demonstrative proof. One of Haeckel's root ideas is the universal truth of the "conservation of matter," whereas Sir Oliver shows, although it is "a reasonable hypothesis, an empirical law, which we have never seen any reason to doubt, and in support of which all scientific experience may be adduced in favour," nevertheless it is not "an experimental fact." Again, the law of the "conservation of energy" is only strictly true when we limit the meaning of "energy." If life is to be included in the category of energy, as Haeckel includes it, the evidence is all the other way. By adding life to a substance we do not seem to have added to the sum total of its energy. In looking, as many philosophers have looked, for something that is persistent, immutable—a fundamental reality—

Haeckel finds that only matter and energy fulfil these requirements; and so assumes that matter and energy are the only fundamental realities.

But, Sir Oliver Lodge points out, the existence of one thing does not disprove the existence of others. "The category of life has not been touched in anything we have said so far; no relation has been established between life and energy, or between life and ether. The nature of life is unknown." The existence of matter and energy does not disprove the existence of life, consciousness, art, poetry, and the various activities of the mind. Haeckel is merely speculating when he says that life, consciousness, art, poetry, &c., are "nascent and latent in the material atoms themselves." The theory of "spontaneous generation" is only a hypothesis. It is only a hypothesis when it is said that consciousness is a "physiological problem," or that "what we call the soul is a natural phenomenon." After showing, with a knowledge comparable with that of Haeckel, that the latter has often gone beyond his scientific principles, Sir Oliver concludes: "If it be generally understood that the most controversial portions of his work are mainly speculative and hypothetical, it can be left to its proper purpose of doing good rather than harm. It can only do harm by misleading; it can do considerable good by criticising and stimulating and informing."

He pours ridicule on the idea that the emotions of a poet who rejoices in a sunset can be expressed in

terms of physiology. He asks at what point the consciousness of the beautiful is evolved from the animal organism; and even supposing that consciousness is evolutionary, does that fact show it to be a mere form of matter and energy? He shows convincingly that life is not proved to be a form of energy; that purpose and design seem to be the essence of the human mind; and that matter is the vehicle, not the substance, of mind. He suggests plausibly that life is "a guiding and controlling entity which interacts with our world according to laws so partially known that we have to say they are practically unknown." He insists on this "guiding," "arranging" quality of life, and here, I think, by his mode of expression lets himself in for a difficulty. Life is not energy, he says, yet the forces of nature are guided, or arranged, by life so that the results are totally different from what they would be without that guidance. Now Haeckel would surely be justified in saying that physical forces of nature could only be directed (*i.e.*, changed) by other physical forces. How can life, which is not energy, "direct" or "interfere with" nature, without itself exerting force? Sir Oliver states that the significance of life appears "to lie in another scheme of things," though it "touches and interacts with this material universe in a certain way." Now if life is "in another scheme," how can it affect the scheme of energy and force without itself coming into that scheme and to that extent partaking of its nature?

This, I think, is more than a verbal objection. He has upset the monistic philosophy of Haeckel the materialist, and then, by a sort of compromise, seems to give a quasi-physical character to the spiritual world. In the material world life, or the soul, finds expression. So far, so good. But to the former, the material, he seems to give a sort of independent existence, which is only modified (how, is not explained) by something else, namely mind. Thus he reproduces Locke's abstract substance, which was demolished by Berkeley, and adds another sort of substance—life, consciousness, mind, &c.—in "another scheme of things."

But the value of Sir Oliver Lodge's criticism lies on its destructive side. The scientific materialism of Haeckel may be shattered by another line of argument, but the author of "Life and Matter" shows that it may be destroyed by taking him on his own scientific ground.

I shall only take one more example of the influence of the scientific spirit in modern life, an example which will serve to show how this spirit has been made to have a very practical influence upon popular ethics and the thought of the working classes. I have been discussing Haeckel; we now come to one of his disciples, Mr. Robert Blatchford, the vigorous editor of the *Clarion*. The particular book I wish to consider, "Not Guilty—A Defence of the Bottom Dog," had, I believe, a very large sale, and was read, and probably accepted, by tens of thousands of people.

Certainly a tribute of praise is due to Mr. Blatchford's undoubted powers of debate. Though one may not care for his occasional flights of bombastic rhetoric and the assertive egotism of his style, his thought and expression are clear; there can be no doubt about his meaning; his sentences are as terse and to the point as they are aggressive. The reader need have no knowledge of metaphysics, theology, ethics, logic or physical science to grasp his argument. He is a first-rate populariser of philosophy, and whenever he has a definite meaning, and he generally has, there is no mistaking what that meaning is.

With the main conclusion of this book few right-minded people will fail to sympathise. It is the instinct of chivalry which leads Mr. Blatchford to espouse the cause of the weaklings and the unfortunate, the lowest product of the criminal classes, and to cry out against "the Yellow Press and the painted altar, and the Parliamentary speeches, and a selfish Heaven and a Hell where the worm never dies." The "bottom dog" whom he puts on his trial and begs us to acquit is "a battered drab, a broken pauper, a hardened thief, a hopeless drunkard, a lurking tramp, a hooligan, who might have been an honest and a useful citizen under fair conditions." He tells us that the born criminal cannot help his crimes, that his ancestors and his environment have made him what he is, that he should not be "blamed" for doing what it is his nature to do, and what he

inevitably must do; and that our system of punishment is unjust and useless. His plea for the desperate, unfortunate creatures whom society consigns to the convict prisons and the gallows is not without eloquence.

> Punishment has never been just, has never been effectual. Punishment has always failed of its purpose; the greater its severity the more abject its failure.
>
> Men cannot be made good and gentle by means of violence and wrong. The real tamers and purifiers of human hearts are love and charity and reason.
>
> You seem to think it is a noble thing to be angry with a criminal, and to be angry with me for defending him. But it is always ignoble to be angry.

But the editor of the *Clarion* does not stand alone in condemning the social conditions which lead to pauperism and crime, in objecting to class prejudices, religious insincerities, false respectability, the cynicism of wealth, and cant in its multitudinous forms—the Pharisaism which makes us thankful that we "are not as other men." It is good to make war upon these things, but that is no reason why Mr. Blatchford should set up a monopoly in his crusade. Nor is it easy to see, unless we remember the wave of scientificism upon which he is borne, why, because he objects to superstition, he should also assault religion; because he objects to a privileged caste, he should attack law and government; because he sees evil in the world, he should deny the goodness of God. He tells us the object

of his book—one that every one will heartily endorse—it is "to plead that men and women, our brothers and sisters, should not be hated, degraded, whipped, imprisoned, hanged and everlastingly damned for being more ignorant and less fortunate than their fellows." But this, which is true, he attempts to demonstrate by scarcely valid arguments. Because God is "the Great First Cause," and man had no share in the making of the world or of his own disposition, therefore he says that God and not man is responsible for the acts of men. And because "man becomes that which he is by the action of forces outside himself," therefore "our human laws which punish men for their acts are unjust laws."

To take the lesser objection first. His conclusion surely is a *non sequitur*. According to his own unnecessarily elaborated view, all that a man is comes either from inherited qualities and predispositions or is acquired by contact with his environment. Human laws no less than Mr. Blatchford's book are a part of the reader's "environment," and if Mr. Blatchford's book may be expected to have any influence upon his readers, even more, I venture to think, will laws have a deterrent effect upon potential criminals. He forgets that the object of judicial punishment is not to satisfy the vindictive passions of the State. Nor is the remedial theory that punishment cures the wrong-doer much in favour nowadays. He calmly ignores the main object of punishment, which is deterrent, that is to say, to keep people from crime under

pain of punishment. It is an act of self-protection on the part of society. It is part of the very environment of which he talks so much, and which in this case conduces to legal behaviour. It is true it is better to provide good social conditions under which there is less incentive to crime, but meantime society takes measures to protect itself. Let him appeal if he likes for a more generous interpretation of the laws without ridiculously suggesting that they should be abolished.

The reader will have seen that Mr. Blatchford bases his whole argument upon a denial of free will. All his ponderous array of Darwinism and Spencerism does not tell us much more than Aristotle told us two thousand and odd years ago. A man inherits certain qualities, the rest come by the modifying influence of environment. His acts at every moment are determined by the character which he has and the circumstances set before him. Therefore he can never choose anything but what he does choose, and there is no freedom of the will.

It is about two hundred years since the fallacy of this kind of talk was pointed out by a more humble philosopher than Mr. Blatchford—Locke. To say that the will is "free" is like saying that "riches" are "rich." To say it is not free is like saying that riches are poor. If he only means that a man cannot act contrary to his character and to the circumstances, nobody will quarrel with him; it is obvious. But what is a man's character? Pat comes the

answer—Ancestors and the action of environment. It is so easy to say, but it blinks all the hard problems of personality. You cannot put qualities into a man and mix them up like pebbles in a bottle, adding one here, taking away another there. To add any one quality to a man is to change all the rest. No single quality that any man has was ever possessed by his ancestors ; put into his own personality it has become his and his alone. To take an instance that I have already taken, no scientist can explain how hydrogen and oxygen become water ; nor can Mr. Blatchford explain how an agglomeration of qualities becomes a character. There is something here much more elusive, much more mysterious, than his materialistic mind cares to contemplate. He commits the common error of assuming that the evolution of mind is in no way different from the evolution of physical organisms ; that all we can say about bodies can be said about the mind by which we know bodies. Matter is finite and governed by determinable laws. Following Haeckel, he assumes without proof that mind is likewise finite and governed by determinable laws.

Put it how he will, this dogmatic author cannot escape the fact that we do see a difference between the animal fury of a gorilla and the evil passion of a man ; and that we make the distinction through the consciousness of a principle within us which sets the higher against the lower, the consciousness of a power within us to develop different sides of our nature. It

is all desperately difficult, but Mr. Blatchford does not make it easy by blinking the difficulties.

. . . . .

The popularity of works such as these shows how the influence of science has permeated the mind of the modern generation ; or, to put it another way, works such as these are symptoms of that admiration for the laws of perceived fact which holds us to-day in its tremendous bondage. Yet we cannot fail to notice how often assertion is interrupted by the note of regret, the tinge of bitterness, the sense that knowledge, so far from bringing content, so far from satisfying the deeper craving of the heart, has only lodged in us the sense of loss, the feeling of despair, the consciousness that the blissful ignorance of Eden has given place to confusion. It has even seemed that to go on learning is only to gain new possibilities of grief. It is easy to argue against the specious propositions of the pseudo-scientists. But the doubt which they have propagated is hard to root out. We strive against it, we protest, we revolt, but we are the children of our generation. We go on making our knowledge the cause of doubt, and doubt the cause of grief, just as our cleverest engineers devote their most brilliant efforts to the creation of new slum areas and higher death-rates.

CHAPTER V

THE PESSIMISM OF THOMAS HARDY

In "The Nemesis of Faith" Froude states a "method" of inquiry which he cannot be said invariably to have followed: "Here is a theory of the world which you bring for my acceptance: well, there is the world; try—will the key fit? Can you read the language into sense by it?"

This we may well believe was Thomas Hardy's method of approaching the questions set before us in his novels. "There is the world"—first of all the world in which he grew up, the familiar world of fields and woods and farms, the homely figure of the peasant, and the sweeping panoramas of valley, stream and down. This for him is not a mere outward show such as the poet of nature and the descriptive novelist rejoice in; it is not to be a mere scene and setting to give extrinsic ornament to a tale. This Wessex country is for him the home of the earth-born, the place which has moulded the lives of countless generations who have grown up under the shadow of the same hills and been awed by the same uncanny mysteries they contain. The man born and bred in such a place "must know all about those

invisible ones of the days gone by, whose feet have traversed the fields which look so grey from the windows; recall whose creaking plough has turned those sods from time to time; whose hands planted the trees that form a crest to the opposite hill; whose horses and hounds have torn through that underwood; what birds affect that particular brake; what bygone domestic dramas of love, jealousy, revenge, or disappointment have been enacted in the cottages, the mansions, the street or on the green." No reader can appreciate Hardy's novels who ranks him with the so-called "descriptive" writers; for the nature described by him is an intimate, ingrained part of the human life which he depicts. Without it, the tale would be incomplete; with it, the domestic tragedy is softened or invested with deeper portent as the witchcraft of place puts it on a grander scale, suggesting those other tragedies which have repeated themselves in this same spot, in this same way, through the ages.

Here then is the world as it breaks first upon the familiar sense, full of enchanting beauty, calling forth such idealism as each man has in him, compelling him at the last to criticise, to see the discrepancies. For soon he is bound to perceive it as a *governed* world, governed not only by the laws of growth and bloom and decay, but by some God or inscrutable fate which marks strangely the destinies of men, imposing upon them contradictory rules, conventions, moralities and social habits. And as he comes to

examine the social views and dogmas which have so profound an influence on persons, he sees not only the tyranny of conventions and ritual, but the exceptional tyranny of that new spirit which in the nineteenth century has invaded even the villages and is ruthlessly shattering the customs, habits and beliefs handed on to them by generations of ancestors. "Here is a theory of the world which you bring for my acceptance"—the theory newly set forth in all the splendour of later nineteenth-century culture—the theory of the rightness of social laws and conventions, the theory of the sanctity of the marriage contract, of the goodness of progress and civilisation, of the blessedness of knowledge in all its forms; and finally a theory which Hardy seems always on the brink of destroying—that of the goodness of God. All of these he puts to the test. In story after story he unrolls the map of life as he sees it, showing us the wistful figures of men striving after worlds which they do not attain, combating evils which they did not create. And his conclusion is almost always the same: No, the key will not fit; I cannot read the language into sense by it.

There are many critics who will tell us that he has made an initial mistake, that he has not given us the real world; that his picture of life is not true to fact, each of his tragedies presenting a concatenation of miseries which seldom befall real men. Let us admit that it is indeed an ill-fated group of persons whom he has chosen for his subjects, deliberately

piling on their shoulders all the evils with which Job was vexed. His habit of adding some last bitter drop to the already heaped up cup of misfortune makes us often feel that he has passed the bounds of probability. Why, after all his other ill-luck, should Giles Winterborne fail to see the writing which Grace chalked upon his wall? And why should Grace, as if by some miracle, be shown the infidelity of Fitzpiers, and yet deceive herself on the subject? Again and again we are tantalised by the promise of good fortune following upon misery, only to find the more bitter disappointment when the hope proves groundless. In "The Return of the Native," when Mrs. Yeobright takes that weary pilgrimage across the heath to be reconciled with her son, they all, husband, wife, and mother, seem now at least to have suffered enough. But no, there is that little accident which hinders the opening of the door, and just that one unlucky moment too soon, she is gone murmuring, "'Tis too much, Clym. How can he bear to do it! He is at home; and yet he lets her shut the door against me!" And thus, instead of hope fulfilled, the tragic gloom becomes more intense and fearful, as we watch the death of the mother, the bitterness of the husband, the flight of the wife, the grim drowning in a dark pool, and last, for anti-climax, a second marriage!

No, the critics are right when they say that the average man or woman does not endure all that Clym Yeobright, or Tess, or Jude had to endure;

that when suffering does come, the average man or woman is not thus perpetually sensitive to its continuous, its overwhelming horror. But then Thomas Hardy has the right to choose his subjects, and for his leading characters he seldom takes average men. The latter constantly appear, but they, belonging to some chorus of village yokels or simple townsfolk, do not take life tragically. They too have their troubles, but not having eyes to see, being less sensitive than the protagonists, they have less to bear. But the persons in whom he is most interested are fully developed characters, sensitive to impressions, capable of cherishing some sort of personal ideal and of being prostrated by the unintelligible cruelty of their lot. They are people fully percipient, taught by life to become conscious of its evils, and fearfully impressed by the difference between the real and the ideal. In some cases the modern spirit of questioning and of self-consciousness has reached them and penetrated them to the very core, so that they wonder why men have so long seemed satisfied with the sorry scheme of creation, which to them is a misfit, a shocking perversion of power on the part of the ruler of the universe. Learning hurts them. Knowledge is an evil, culture is a disaster, insidiously wounding those upon whom it descends like a nightmare of disillusion. Even the untutored Tess finds herself "expressing in her own native phrases . . . feelings which might almost be called those of the age—the

ache of modernism." The little learning which is put into her mind oppresses her; it only makes her remember "that your nature and your past doings have been just like thousands' and thousands', and that your coming life and doings 'll be like thousands' and thousands'." But, she says, "I shouldn't mind learning why—why the sun do shine on the just and the unjust alike. But that's what books 'll not tell me." And similarly the heroine of "The Woodlanders" was one who "combined modern nerves with primitive feelings, and was doomed by such co-existence to be numbered among the distressed, and to take her scourgings to their exquisite extremity." Jude's son is one of those "boys of a sort unknown in the last generation—the outcome of new views of life. They seem to see all its terrors before they are old enough to have staying power to resist them . . . It is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live." We are constantly faced with the tragedy of "the modern vice of unrest," of "the view of life as a thing to be put up with, replacing that zest for existence which was so intense in early civilisations," and the sudden new sense which comes with enlightenment expressed tersely by the Mayor of Casterbridge—"I am to suffer, I perceive."

He shows us a procession of men "born to misery," but the tragedy of it for him is that they are not at bottom to blame for their suffering. It is the circumstances which are all wrong. He finds

that the whole social system is not only inadequate for the production of happiness, but contrived as if by diabolical skill to make us all miserable. Sometimes he is exposing the cruelties of the marriage contract and the tragic penalty of offending formal public opinion. "All romances end at marriage," Troy says cynically to Bathsheba in "Far from the Madding Crowd." "Their lives were ruined," Jude reflects when shamed by his wife; "ruined by the fundamental error of their matrimonial union: that of having based a permanent contract on a temporary feeling." The law of marriage is but one of the rigid conventions made often, not for men, but for the undoing of men; for the undermining of some higher duty, something more instinctive, more primitive, and perhaps more noble. He shows us the same tyranny arising from the "social mould civilisation fits us into," the strictness and fatal blindness of "the world and its ways," which sweep all men into the same uniform current where none are at liberty. The "modern vice of unrest" is for ever urging us to push civilisation to its vicious extreme, to acquire knowledge of what once was secret, so that now in our new-found consciousness we can no longer deceive ourselves; we know the evil of our lot, we know that actual things are the opposite of our ideals.

Thomas Hardy goes so far as to suggest that God is either a defeated God, or that he is indifferent if not actually hostile to men. He shows us

the modern man stirred into consciousness, stoutly denying his own fault, and on the whole too good for so bad a world; a man who has roused himself from the mediæval dream of the wickedness of humanity, repudiating as hypocrisy the doctrine of original sin, and declaring that the evil is in that over which he has no control. If some one has to be blamed, he hints that it should be, not man, but the author and First Cause of human conditions. Sue Fawley is seen vaguely imagining "that the First Cause worked automatically like a somnambulist, and not reflectively like a sage; that at the framing of the terrestrial conditions there seemed never to have been contemplated such a development of emotional perceptiveness among the creatures subject to those conditions as that reached by thinking and educated humanity." At another time we are told of a man who suddenly realises the possibility that the world may be governed by a Supreme Being possessed of a lower standard of morality than that of man himself. Everywhere his persons are made aware either of the "Unfulfilled Intention" or of an "unsympathetic First Cause." "Who is to blame?" Sue is asked, and she replies—

> "I don't know. The Universe, I suppose—things in general, because they are so horrid and cruel!"

The cruelty then is not in man but in "things in general"—in the scheme of modern society, in

the system of hard-and-fast ideas under which we live, in the uncontrollable destiny which directs our lives, tyrannically or blindly. The pessimism of Thomas Hardy is neither that of Swift nor that of Job. He has none of the cynical disbelief in human nature which marked the one, nor is he, recognising the good governance of the world, content to say, "Cursed be the day upon which I was born." He is a rebel, protesting against the intrusive rule both of dogmatic morality and of a ubiquitous science and culture. Knowledge and orthodox goodness may at any moment become evil to him, because they are based on false standards. He finds more freedom and spontaneousness in the superstitions of the pagan; the genius of places remains for him a symbol of the beautiful, free world which is passing, of that primeval state wherein man lived unafflicted by the consciousness of good and bad. The woods and fields, the heath and the hills, the very leaves and the worms underfoot, seem to him now to be suffering along with man; they are responsive to his instincts, they join with him in his cry of agony. In nearly all his stories, as one is ushered into the human drama, one is at the same time taken into a *place* which is part of it, a panorama with growing, creeping and flying things which belong to the soul and spirit of the tragedy. That opening scene in "The Return of the Native" remains with us throughout the story:

> As the resting man looked at the barrow he became aware that its summit, hitherto the highest object in the whole prospect

round, was surmounted by something higher. It rose from the semi-globular mound like a spike from a helmet. The first instinct of an imaginative stranger might have been to suppose it the person of one of the Celts who built the barrow, so far had all of modern date withdrawn from the scene. It seemed a sort of last man among them, musing for a moment before dropping into eternal night with the rest of his race.

There the form stood, motionless as the hill beneath. Above the plain rose the hill, above the hill rose the barrow, and above the barrow, rose the figure. Above the figure was nothing that could be mapped elsewhere than on a celestial globe.

Such a perfect, delicate, and necessary finish did the figure give to the dark pile of hills that it seemed to be the only obvious justification of their outline. Without it, there was the dome without the lantern; with it the architectural demands of the mass were satisfied. The scene was strangely homogeneous. The vale, the upland, the barrow, and the figure above it amounted only to unity. Looking at this or that member of the group was not observing a complete thing, but a fraction of a thing.

The form was so much like an organic part of the entire motionless structure that to see it move would have impressed the mind as a strange phenomenon. Immobility being the chief characteristic of that whole which the person formed portion of, the discontinuance of immobility in any quarter suggested confusion.

Yet that is what happened. The figure perceptibly gave up its fixity, shifted a step or two, and turned round. As if alarmed, it descended on the right side of the barrow, with the glide of a water-drop down a bud, and then vanished. The movement had been sufficient to show more clearly the characteristics of the figure, and that it was a woman's.

The reason of her sudden displacement now appeared. With her dropping out of sight on the right side, a new-comer, bearing a burden, protruded into the sky on the left side, ascended the tumulus, and deposited the burden on the top. A second fol-

lowed, then a third, a fourth, a fifth, and ultimately the whole barrow was peopled with burdened figures.

And then again, less laboured, is that picture of Giles Winterbourne when he seems almost to incarnate the autumn :

He looked and smelt like Autumn's very brother, his face being sunburnt to wheat-colour, his eyes blue as cornflowers, his sleeves and leggings dyed with fruit-stains, his hands clammy with the sweet juice of apples, his hat sprinkled with pips, and everywhere about him that atmosphere of cider which at its first return each season has such an indescribable fascination for those who have been born and bred in orchards.

If fate is represented as cruel, not so human nature. Most of Hardy's men are, like all the growing, sentient things in nature, good and noble in their impulses till they are thwarted by society and some despotic rule unsuited for them. Human beings are for him worthy of praise and pity because they have been laden with sorrows which they did not deserve, and are kinder to one another than God is kind to them. He is not pessimistic about human nature. There is nothing wrong with Giles Winterbourne, nothing wrong with Marty South. Is there any finer passage in Hardy's works than Marty South's lyrical outburst of grief when she laments the death of the man who had never loved her ?

" Now, my own, own love," she whispered, " you are mine, and on'y mine ; for she has forgot 'ee at last, although for her you died ! But I—whenever I get up I'll think of 'ee, and whenever

I lie down I'll think of 'ee. Whenever I plant the young larches I'll think that none can plant as you planted ; and whenever I split a gad, and whenever I turn the cider wring, I'll say none could do it like you. If ever I forget your name let me forget home and heaven ! . . . But no, no, my love, I never can forget 'ee ; for you was a good man and did good things ! "

CHAPTER VI

THE DECADENTS

We have now seen how some of the popular manifestations of science have led to a revolt against the cruder forms of religion; how hard doctrines based upon the sole validity of matter and sensation have been made to tyrannise over the fairer forms of belief. We have seen also how a subtle thinker like Thomas Hardy has exposed the weakness of civilisation in its effect upon thought and character, and has shown its shams, its brutality and its cynical self-consciousness. Everywhere he depicts men and women afflicted in a world of pain and sorrow, suffering from no fault of their own and neglected by God. He does not deny God; but he asserts that if there is a God, he is not a good or a beneficent ruler in the sense that we understand goodness and beneficence, and that men, judged from our own human standpoint, are on the whole better, kinder, more merciful, and more sympathetic than the Being which created them.

And now we come naturally and pitifully to a class of men who seem to perceive the same weakness in the governance of the world and the same insin-

cerity in modern conventions, but who lack that largeness of heart, that depth of sympathy and that grip upon hard fact which characterise the genius of Hardy. There is another fundamental difference. In doubting God, they also doubt men ; in doubting His morality, they doubt all morality: they are cast back upon their own standards of pleasure, upon their own ideas of sweetness, charm, harmony, grace and fitness, so that that only is good and noble which conforms to their own taste. The ancient dictum of Protagoras, "Man is the measure of all things," is applied by them in its most completely egotistic sense. The world being, according to their modern view, a place which tends to be unpleasant and intolerable, offering no certain end beyond that of life, no motive worth considering except that of pleasure, they devote themselves to securing the greatest sum total of exquisite joys, not of course excluding those which may come from the impulses of friendship, kindness and generosity.

This type of man is familiar enough in contemporary literature. He is apt to base his philosophy upon that of the ancient and the modern Epicureans, to study the more sensuous and mellifluous possibilities of language, to be exact in rhythm, loose in thought, adopting "Art for Art's sake" as his motto. Such rules of conduct as he may choose to accept will be based upon what he calls artistic perception and taste : he will interpret morality in terms of delicate emotion; he will endeavour to

present human life under the bewitching influences of sounds, tones, colours and odours. All that is ugly, base and jarring will be used for the purposes of background to the picture; will achieve the artistic purpose of contrast, and give a delicate poignancy to the total effect. His aim always is to find new raw material for sensations, and new arts with which to incarnate them.

To take the case of the late Oscar Wilde is, no doubt, to take an extreme instance. But suppose we consider that one of his works which seemed to show him in his most sincere mood, at a time when, as many have asserted, he repented his life and turned to the deep contemplation of religion. Suddenly in "De Profundis" we find him declaring: "I need not tell you that to me reformations in morals are as meaningless and vulgar as Reformations in theology." This is only one of many sentences in his prison utterance which show that it was too hastily judged by many of the newspaper critics. Most of them, recalling the tragedy of his death and his return from prison to an unreformed life, wondered how these melodious confessions of regret, this intimate talk about Christ and the Gospels, could be reconciled with so shameful an ending. They affected to see in this little book something like a death-bed repentance, the expression of poignant regret for a moral suicide, the finding of consolation in religion and the celebration, as it were, of the rites of Supreme Unction. But

for my part I cannot find in those confessions the last utterances of a fallen tragic hero, with the well-proportioned tragedy marred only by a sordid ending. Nor does it seem necessary to regard these pages as a deliberate deceit, as one of the intentional poses of a man who had lived always before the footlights. "It is a very unimaginative nature," he says himself, "which only cares for people on their pedestals." Perhaps this fine writing, with its Epicurean philosophy, is not so incompatible with the dismal after-act as many have supposed.

To be fair to the book, there are not many sentences which strike a false note or suggest a resonant appeal to the balcony. The studied phrase, the seeking after the just effect of words, the delicate poise of thought and feeling, these indeed are to be found, but are they not the very art of which Wilde, "once a lord of language," as he proudly calls himself, was always a consummate master? In the moments of anguish in his prison he felt the need of expressing his mood and his feelings about life as he, by nature an artist, had always felt it. "Expression," he cries—and why should the use of a fine simile be a token of insincerity?—"expression is as necessary to me as leaf and blossoms are to the black branches of the trees that show themselves above the prison walls and are so restless in the wind." What Wilde felt, meant and knew in Reading gaol he has written down truthfully, and to me it seems perfectly

consistent with his brilliant literary career and his contemptible philosophy.

After all, when he began to write this book, he had passed through the period of tears and bitter complaint, of self-reproach and mortification, and now he had begun again to "possess his soul," to "feel more regret for the people who laughed than for myself," to accept proudly and turn to account this period of suffering. The book is not a confession of sin; it is a challenge and a vindication of the life of universal experience. He boldly reviews himself as "a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture" of his age. Suddenly he finds that his crime has turned "a sort of eternity of fame to an eternity of infamy," and in the degradation of his prison cell he for the first time learns the full meaning of "sorrow." But he refuses to be crushed by it; he is not fundamentally ashamed at his own "perversity"; he is much more concerned to learn the meaning of this strange experience—sorrow—one of the few great emotions he had never understood.

I don't regret for a single moment having lived for pleasure. I did it to the full, as one should do everything that one does. There was no pleasure I did not experience. I threw the pearl of my soul into a cup of wine. I went down the primrose path to the sound of flutes. I lived on honeycomb. But to have continued the same life would have been wrong, because it would have been limiting. I had to pass on. The other half of the garden had its secrets for me also.

This is not the note of repentance. Surely it is nearer to exultation. If now he is prepared to accept sorrow and the "treasure" of humility, it is not because he regrets, but because, having exhausted one field of emotion, he seeks a new range of life, where the feeling may be more intense and the outlook of a deeper and more vivid hue. His very degradation is to be an influence in "spiritualising the soul." "I want to get to the point when I shall be able to say quite simply, and without affectation, that the two great turning-points in my life were when my father sent me to Oxford, and when society sent me to prison."

And then there are those intimate, unfamiliar passages about Christ and the Gospels. Here is no spectacle of a sinner turning for comfort to the broad charity of the Christian religion. It is in no humble spirit of surrender that he approaches the study of Christ the individual. Rather there is a touch of proud defiance, of self-confidence and inalienable egotism, the utmost that the Greeks meant by ὕβρις in the manner in which he reads nineteenth century æstheticism into the personality of Christ. He speaks of "Christ as the precursor of the romantic movement in life"; as one who saw that "to be unpractical was to be a great thing"; who "through some divine instinct in him seems to have always loved the sinner as being the nearest possible approach to the perfection of man." "That is the charm about Christ," he says, as if he were

speaking of a picture; his whole life "is really an idyll"; there is an "intimate and immediate connection between the true life of Christ and the true life of the artist." His place, he says with later Renaissance blitheness, "is with the poets"; and thus the greatest spiritual influence in the western world is rhythmically and insolently relegated to the exclusive poetical coterie of Shelley and Sophocles and Oscar Wilde!

Surely in the whole history of literature no "confessions" ever contained so proud and wilful a self-justification as this attempt to justify an unordered epicureanism—the decadent philosophy of Wilde—by an appeal to the spirit of the Gospels! With its clear, rhythmic language, its union of thought and feeling, its direct appeal to the sense of the beautiful, "De Profundis" may possibly have attained a lasting place in literature. But its author is one whom Plato would have sent on crowned and garlanded to another city. He has proclaimed that the undisciplined life was good. He writes in no chastened spirit of submission, but with a cry of self-approval and triumph. Not content to say, "Evil, be thou my good," he has the daring to make even the gods his accomplices.

In most important respects Mr. George Moore belongs to the same literary school as Oscar Wilde. It would certainly be unfair to take his "Memoirs of My Dead Life" as being strictly autobiographical, but the book itself seems to be an excellent illustra-

tion of what is called "decadence" in literature. (For decadence surely has set in when art like a drooping flower is parted from the live forces of nature, or when some form of life is maintained after the life itself has departed.) See how Mr. Moore puts the over-cultivated imitations of nature before nature itself, before everything, in fact, which gives healthy art its meaning:

> "Had I a palette," he says, "I could match the blue of the peignoir with the faint grey sky. I could make a picture out of that dusky suburb. Had I a pen I could write verses about these people of old time; but the picture would be a shrivelled thing compared with the dream, and the verses would limp."

All that he has to say in his "Memoirs" is expressed in terms of shadows, dreams, hues, tones, sensations, and gradations of perception fading into blissful vacancy. It is not things, objects, realities, which are of concern to him, but their image which he frames in his mind, weaving cobwebs out of himself, constructing aerial fancies. In the old days most of us were wont to imagine that a picture which showed us green trees was meant to suggest real green trees, and we had not thought that the picture might be more wonderful than the reality it represented. But Mr. Moore corrects us. What is anything but a subject which he, divine artist-poet that he is, could turn into a picture, a poem, a symphony, or some high-sounding name of an art which is wonderful because it is not real? "The

beech and the birch, all the other trees," he exclaims, —and one must imagine an expository wave of the hand—"only began to be beautiful when men invented painting."

This book, unlike most autobiographies, tells us not so much what the author has done, but what are his present sensations when he reflects upon his past sensations. He seems to regard the whole of his life as a succession of harmoniously arranged colours; each incident must be of a certain hue, fading by imperceptible gradations into the next hue, and if the colour is just not right—why, that too is well, for it gives him occasion for wistful regret, for pronouncing upon the uncertainty and meaninglessness of life and languishing like an affected woman with his beautiful, limpid, sibilant, febrile sentences. If the art is wrong anywhere—well, there is always a servant at hand to bring in "some claret and a syphon."

Let us take an instance of his manner from the third sketch in this volume. He is about to record his impressions relating to an anæmic waitress in a restaurant whose failure in life arouses his emotions. He opens with a few sentences of literary criticism, containing an allusion to Giacomo Cenci, and an expression of admiration for the words "romance of destiny, ultimate islands." Then we find him on his way, with Gervex and Mademoiselle D'Avary, to a "certain ultimate café in the Latin Quarter." "I had thought that the place seemed too rough for

Mademoiselle D'Avary," he remarks, " but Gervex had said that we should find a quiet corner, and we happened to choose one in charge of a thin, delicate girl, a girl touched with languor, weakness, and a grace which interested and moved me; her cheeks were thin, and the deep grey eyes were wistful as a drawing of Rossetti; her waving brown hair fell over the temples, and was looped up low over the neck after the Rossetti fashion." The two women are contrasted. Mademoiselle D'Avary

> wore a flower-enwoven dress, and from under the large hat her hair showed dark as night; and her southern skin filled with rich tints, yellow and dark green where the hair grew scanty on the neck; the shoulders drooped into opulent suggestion in the lace bodice. And it was interesting to compare her ripe beauty with the pale deciduous beauty of the waitress. Mademoiselle D'Avary sat, her fan wide spread across her bosom, her lips parted, the small teeth showing between the red lips. The waitress sat, her thin arms leaning on the table, joining very prettily in the conversation, betraying only in one glance that she knew that she was only a failure and Mademoiselle D'Avary a success.

The pale, delicate girl, whose approaching death the doctor had announced, remained in his thoughts. He wanders on, thinking of her and of her certain death, and seizes the sad occasion to cry languishingly " We all want to think at midnight under the moon when the city looks like a black Italian engraving, and poems come to us as we watch a swirling river." That night he wrote down a poem, which he here

embalms in his Memoirs, and dedicates "to her nameless memory." Here are a few lines:

> Although I never loved as yet
> Methinks that I might love you; I would get
> From out the knowledge that the time was brief,
> That tenderness, whose pity grows to grief,
> And grief that sanctifies, a joy, a charm,
> Beyond all other loves, for now the arm
> Of Death is stretched to you-ward, and he claims
> You as his bride.

He is very frank about the nature of his passion when he goes on:

> Maybe my soul misnames
> Its passion; love perhaps it is not, yet
> To see you fading like a violet,
> Or some sweet thought, would be a very strange
> And costly pleasure, far beyond the range
> Of formal man's emotions.

The poem concludes:

> Death takes but little, yea your death has given
> Me that deep peace, an immaculate possession
> Which man may never find in earthly passion.

And Mr. Moore criticises the technique of his early venture—the elision here, the unsatisfying line there. Here is the conclusion deftly corrected:

> Death takes but little. Death I thank for giving
> Me a remembrance, and a pure possession
> Of unrequited love.

From this display of verbal elegance and brutal reflection he turns to pathetic apostrophe : " Poor little Irish girl ! Cast out in the end by a sudden freshet on an ultimate café ! "

" Forgive my sensuousness, dear reader ; remember that it was the first time I breathed the soft Southern air, the first time I saw orange-trees ; remember that I am a poet, a modern Jason in search of a golden fleece ! " We need to remember these things as we watch him toying amorously with the " decadent charms " of elderly women, comparing his desires with the arts, coolly " taking up another thread in life " as if he were taking up a biscuit, or singing the praises of adultery because without it " the world would have been the poorer of a great love story."

Let us admit that Mr. Moore writes beautifully ; that he knows literature and has the charm of words ; that he is, if we must use the term, " an artist." It is his idea of art to be able to write down, to convey through the medium of words, all experience, to search through the pearls of his own feelings, and set them forth, decorously or otherwise, for all the world to look upon. Reticence, reserve, shame, are not part of his artistic armoury. All the crude sensual feelings which he affects to have experienced he tries to set forth under a halo of refined terms and images, and to palm off the result as fine art. He forgets that there are truths about which the great artists have always thought it seemly to be silent.

Goethe did not thrust his affectations of love into literature as Mr. Moore has done; Hazlitt wrote strange letters in the "Liber Amoris," but did not intend them to be published. But Mr. Moore is unshrinking. He pushes the private pleasures of his life upon us. Borrowing the semblance and nothing but the semblance of Walter Pater's philosophy, he bodies it forth in this strange example of falsely realistic, enervating, decadent literature.

However much we may like or dislike Mr. Moore's manner of writing it is impossible to deny his wide knowledge of literature and his singular command of language. He has acquired an undoubted supremacy in his own school and has been frequently imitated. It will be sufficient to consider one book by an author who has modelled himself upon him—"Visionaries," by Mr. James Huneker.

"He was a critic who wrote brilliantly of music in the terms of painting, of plastic arts in the technical phraseology of music, and by him the drama was discussed purely as literature." In this sentence it is easy to see, first, the influence of Mr. George Moore, and secondly, that Mr. Huneker is describing himself. His stories are set in a pungent atmosphere of æstheticism. We feel as if he had passed in succession under the hypnotic influence of many diverse modern writers and artists—Guy de Maupassant, Nietzsche, Ibsen, and Wiertz. He is self-conscious about himself and his art; his persons

seem to be rolling their eyes as if all the gods were looking at them; "ideas" are paraded as if to show that culture is not concerned with things; and the young "Balliol" atmosphere of twenty years ago is intensified in the guise of modern impressionism. But not content, like the less ambitious impressionists, to paint the sun as a black mass surrounded by fires, or trees as slim ghosts in the moonlight, he insists on confusing the arts, talking of musical composers "who have expressed perfume in tone," of "symphonic sauces," "odour symphonies," and even "a terrific orchestration of chromatic odours." He tells the story of a lady who makes the blending of perfumes a fine art; but at no time has he himself any difficulty in perceiving perfumes as pictures or pictures as sounds, carrying his reader into a dreamy, moony world, where demi-mondaines are angels and geniuses are lunatics.

It goes without saying that he has that notion which is popular in certain "æsthetic" circles, that Art is a wonderful thing in a region apart by itself, which ought to be worshipped, lived for, and died for by that select few who are its constituted guardians on earth. One of his young æsthetes reflects upon the "colourless, toiling barbarians, with their undistinguished physiognomies, their uncouth indifference to art." His own art finds its inspiration not in persons, things, or events, not in any kind of real life, but in sententious and often morbid ideas. It is true he would not deliberately dissociate art and

life; but by "life" he seems to mean that lounging about in social backwaters implied in the phrase, "seeing life." "And it took me some years," says one friend to another languidly—"yes, all the time you were in Paris learning how to paint and live." His very use of the term "life" suggests dropping with fatigue.

Plain English is for the most part too undistinguished for him. He prefers elaborate phrases, far-fetched images, fanciful similes. "The churning of the orchestra, foaming hysteria of the strings, bellowing of the brass"—"A delicate note of iris, most episcopal of perfumes, emerged from the mass of odours"—"Obsessed from the age of spelling by his pessimistic middle name, the boy had grown up in a cloudy compromise of rebellion and the Church." These are sentences taken almost at random. We often feel as if the writer were seeking to imitate the style of Zola, Schopenhauer and Mr. Henry James at the same time and in the same paragraph. This affectation, or extravagance, is not confined to his style, but affects also his delineation of characters. What are we to make of a very young, and apparently very ignorant, lady, who, moved to ecstasy by the gestures of a bandmaster, imagines things in the following manner?

> Lora trembled in the gale that blew across the Puzia. She imagined a determined Hungarian prairie, over which dashed disordered centaurs, brandishing clubs, driving before them a band of satyrs and leaping fauns. The hoofed men struggled

At their front was a monster with a black goat-face and huge horns; he fought fiercely the half-human horses. The sun, a thin scarf of light, was eclipsed by earnest clouds; the curving thunder closed over the battle; the air was flame-sprinkled and enlaced by music; and most melancholy were the eyes of the defeated Pan—the melancholy eyes of Arpad Vihary.

Lora is a very foolish and imaginative young lady. Surely in a moment of nervous ecstasy she would not picture her centaurs and satyrs and fauns with such classical accuracy! And though it may be quite possible for Mr. Huneker to *see* music and *hear* pictures, we cannot believe that nice young ladies at restaurants are likewise afflicted.

The school to which he belongs is decadent because it subsists mainly upon ideas about ideas, instead of ideas about life. It is not suggested that he writes without power, or that he fails to produce an effect or an atmosphere. Sometimes his character drawing is clever, if not pleasing, and in "The Third Kingdom" his peculiar manner is suitable to his subject. Brother Hyzlo, after thinking, doubting, wrestling with his thoughts in his solitary cell, is transported in a dream to ancient Alexandria, where he converses with Philo, who tells him of a magnificent scheme for a new drama—"a gigantic world drama, which shall embody all the myths of mankind, all the noblest thoughts of the philosophers." Then Philo unfolds to him the Gospel story, which he has just invented, and intends to palm off upon the world as true; and when he has told it, asks "Is

that not a magnificent idea for a drama?" "Excellent," answered Hyzlo; "but continue."

That last sentence is admirable irony, a bitterly humorous criticism of life; it shows that even so extreme a decadent as Mr. Huneker is capable at moments of abandoning his false art and reaching a higher scale of truth.

CHAPTER VII

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL

THE annual consumption of new novels per head of the population is not given in any book of statistics, but we may be sure that the figure would not be small. If any art has been assimilated into the inmost being of our age it is that of the popular novelist. Millions of English-speaking people read fiction, and thousands are always writing it, observing life as the raw material of art, studying technique, and aiming always at originality on the one hand and probability on the other. The novel has become the natural medium for every kind of self-expression. If any one has views about society, he embodies them in a novel; if he wishes to criticise the Church or the Army, he writes a novel; if he wishes to express his confident admiration of human nature, or to pour forth vitriolic contempt at its follies, his natural instinct leads him to the production of a novel.

Though tales have been told from the beginning of time, the novel as we now use the term is a comparatively recent invention. Richardson, Fielding and Smollett were the authors of tales rather than novels in the modern sense, though Fielding fixed

the arrival of a new art by prescribing rules of procedure for himself based for the most part on the analogy of the drama. Fiction kept mainly to the external facts of life, rejoicing in rollicking company, in broad jests, in movement of every kind, and sorrowing at the woes of the unfortunate. It was critical of life just so far as the eighteenth century was critical; that is to say, it minutely analysed manners, but it did not minutely dissect the heart. Later it felt the full influence of the romantic revival in the broader sympathies, the deeper feeling, the awakened imagination which are revealed in the works of Scott and Dickens.

As the nineteenth century progressed the novel took a great place along with other literature in providing an index to the progressive mind of society. Just as the French Revolution first stirred to its depths the heart of the modern communities, so the modern intellect was profoundly and radically affected by the Industrial Revolution, that prodigious outcome of science which changed the conditions of commerce and trade, shifted the population, and altered the balance of social power. In giving its full value to the influence of the French Revolution I cannot but think that literary critics have failed to give due weight to that other mighty revolution which appeared at the same moment in history. The imagination of men was moved, and moved quickly, by the force of passion which convulsed France and overturned monarchies. But at the same

time there was a slower, more sure, subtle and penetrating force which was altering conditions of work, which created great factories and towns, introduced means of quick transit, and increased the rapidity and the pressure of life. This great and lasting movement which has not yet reached its culminating-point was the result of intellect applied to life and labour, and it had and is having its gradual effect upon the mind just as the French Revolution had its instantaneous effect upon the heart. At first it imposed but a single stratum of intellectualism upon the prepared base of emotionalism. In those days, when the nineteenth century was still comparatively young, the combination proved a happy one : Carlyle, Browning, George Eliot and Thackeray all revealed the wonderful fructification of feeling and thought, the union between the heart and the orderly inquiring spirit of science. It was George Eliot who became the first great writer of what we call psychological novels, for she applied the inductive methods of science to the problems of individual persons in fiction. But with her the mystery of personality and the complex of motives and feelings which go to the making of personality was not dispelled because she was capable at moments of drawing aside the veil and revealing the naked soul ; she adopted the methods and interests of science without becoming imbued with its dogmatism and cocksureness. Tito Melema, systematically re-

vealed, is examined like a creature under chloroform, yet the novelist does not lose her faith in the unseen and inexplicable powers of life. In spite of her unflinching operations upon the mind she is far from suggesting that her explanation is complete. Her analysis does not disenchant; it does not banish pity and fear.

The transition from George Eliot to Mr. Meredith and Mr. Henry James marks another stage in the triumph of intellect over heart. The former as a rule not only stands outside the emotions which he describes, but those emotions themselves are subordinated to a theory of character, and are set before us subtly and ingeniously as the raw material out of which to construct a scientific view of habits, characters and their modification by environment. It is true there is abundant passion, but (except in two or three works, such as "The Shaving of Shagpat," and "The Tragic Comedians") we are often compelled to notice that the very passion, where it is exhibited, is calculated with that sort of nicety which a chemist employs when he calculates the strength of an electric current required for a laboratory experiment. Take, as an extreme instance, the study of Sir Willoughby Patterne: it is subtle, refined, fascinating, and true; but it is scarcely sympathetic. Who cares about Sir Willoughby Patterne for his own sake? Who feels more than an intellectual interest in what he may or may not become? Who can hate, or love,

or pity, or fear, or envy, or thoroughly despise the hero of "The Egoist"? We are tickled by the transcendent humour and the satire; we marvel at the clever analysis, the suggestive allusion, and the literary generalship with which the author marshals incident, scene and *dénouement;* but only now and then, when he overlooks his time and generation and bursts into almost lyrical narration, can we forget the cleverness and submit ourselves to the lofty expansion of the artist's mood.

I hope that I may not seem to under-estimate what I believe to be the transcendent genius of Mr. Meredith. On the contrary, I feel that he has done more than any other modern to give fiction a place worthy of the study of the serious and the learned. Explicitly he states his own view of his art:

> Do but perceive that we are coming to philosophy, the stride towards it will be a giant's—a century a day. . . . The forecast may be hazarded, that if we do not speedily embrace Philosophy in fiction, the Art is doomed to extinction, under the shining multitude of its professors.

Mr. Meredith saw the trend of the age; he anticipated it, and laid down the moulds which others were to follow from blind necessity and not from wisdom. His was to be the Critical Philosophy of fiction. It must be so, he maintained, until we have got rid of the "rose-pink and dirty drab" which are the common stock of our sentimental life:

> Philosophy bids us see that we are not so pretty as rose-pink, not so repulsive as dirty drab, and that instead of everlastingly

shifting those barren aspects, the sight of ourselves is wholesome, bearable, fructifying, finally a delight. . . .

Imagine the celestial refreshment of having a pure decency in the place of sham ; real flesh ; a soul born active, wind-beaten, but ascending. . . .

Be wary of the disrelish of brainstuff. You must feed on something. Matter that is not nourishing to brains can help to constitute nothing but the bodies which are pitched on rubbish heaps. Brainstuff is not lean stuff ; the brainstuff of fiction is internal history, and to suppose it dull is the profoundest of errors.

Here we have the novelist's theory of fiction stated perfectly clearly, and whether we like it or not we are bound to accept it as his hypothesis. Whatever we may think of his followers, he at least, following his own scientific method and transcending it, is all for the hard masculinity in life, for the sincere, disciplined emotion as opposed to the raw sentiment and rhetoric of youth. He is colossal in his sympathies, not for the weak, or the effeminate, or the languishing, or the bombastic, but for every kind of thought and emotion if only it belongs to genuine life, if only it touches the eternal questions of art. He aims at showing "the within and without of us," life where it is touched by culture, life as it is affected and intensified by philosophy and the Fine Arts, life moral and otherwise self-conscious in all its forms. It is the sheer abundance of Mr. Meredith's genius which carries us away; he is thought and heart reduced almost to a balance, the overweight being on the side of thought. He was

the first to fall under the spell of the age which was commencing, but we must not credit him with the weakness of his successors.

The method of Mr. Henry James is to take the moods of a character, to dwell upon them, amplify them, modify them, insisting upon their curious psychological value however insignificant and superficial they may seem to be. He has the instinct of a philosopher to whom the trivial is always important and significant, being something wonderfully intricate, like a flower which the botanist analyses into its hundred constituent parts. In Mr. James's work we feel too often that people are extensive ; seldom that they are intensive. They may have been analysed to the last degree ; so that we come to know more *about* them, but do not always see more deeply *into* them.

Yet both George Meredith and Henry James so often rise superior to their own methods, and have in so marked a degree the power of imparting themselves—in the "grand manner"—showing again and again that the French Revolution is not dead within them, that we feel they do not belong wholly to the new generation, and cannot be summed up under generalisations. When we come to some of the essentially modern novelists we feel that the psychological tendency has gone further, as far indeed as it can go. And here at once we are confronted with a curious fact. Though the scientific habit of analysis has gained the mastery, the emotional ele-

ment, so far from becoming less, often seems to be profuse and excessive.

I say "seems" to be, for upon a little reflection I think it becomes evident that there is not really a great fund of emotion in the typical modern novel. The one great emotional theme in five novels out of six is the sentiment of love presented under various disguises of plot and circumstance, complications and cross-issues. The great sex question, the relations between men and women before or after marriage, the complex circumstances of society into which the love passion obtrudes itself—these alone afford the appeal to the heart in the bulk of modern novels. I need not dwell upon this subject, for it has been set forth effectively by Mr. W. L. Courtney in his "Feminine Note in Modern Fiction." It is sufficient to point out that the abundance of love sentiment in the modern novel exists at the expense of the more various and deeper emotions portrayed by Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Kingsley, Borrow, Stevenson, and Anthony Trollope.

The three books which I am taking as illustrations of the modern psychological novel are chosen because they are the work of three notable writers of fiction who agree in adopting the method of introspective analysis and in depending upon a strong "love interest." Of the three authors, Mrs. Humphry Ward is the least "modern." She belongs most evidently to the school of George Eliot. She takes her sujbects from the great world

of politics or art, and fits her characters therein. Even in her later books she has not been carried away by all the literary temptations of the modern, and has certainly retained her "literary conscience" more than any contemporary of equal popularity.

Let us consider what is probably the best of her later works—"The Marriage of William Ashe." Even her detractors would agree that it is marked off from the rank and file of popular novels by a quality which we may like or dislike, but which is at least distinctive. The reader must be prepared to endure certain flowing mannerisms which have become inherent in Mrs. Ward's style; he must preserve his equanimity when he hears ladies speaking of the hero as the "ablest, handsomest, and charmingest of men"; or when he sees that gentleman bending over the heroine "in his large, handsome geniality." These and many other tricks of language, taken from the Early Victorian and steeped in modern sentiment, are a frequent source of irritation. But this defect is less marked in "William Ashe" than in many of Mrs. Ward's books. The machinery of story-telling is deftly worked; the emotions of the novelist are often kept well in hand; there is some restraint and hardness in description, and some elasticity in the play of action.

The book is essentially a "society novel," and considerably exceeds the fashionable length of three hundred odd pages; for the author has not been

content to present a mere section cut out of society, but has left scope for her persons and situations to develop like grown trees out of striplings. She has created a grand background for her characters in order to make a contrast between her microcosm and macrocosm. William Ashe is introduced to us as a rising young Radical politician, already an Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and one of the hopes of his party. His mother, Lady Tranmore, is a sensible lady with sound aristocratic ideas, who is advising her son to marry. It is expected that his choice will fall upon his cousin, Mary Lyster, a correct, statuesque, highly suitable person for the head of a great household. However, he meets Lady Kitty, who has been brought up in a French convent school, and is the daughter of a lady with a shady past and a doubtful present. She is eighteen years of age; at first sight she "wills" him to come and speak to her; she knows little and cares less about social conventions; is bright, impetuous, irresistible, a tornado of emotions and trivial improprieties. Attracted as she is by the suave, imposing personality of William Ashe, she can be confiding to him in the morning and in the afternoon flirting wildly with that notorious journalist and poet, Geoffrey Cliffe.

Ashe thinks he understands this wayward and whimsical specimen of womankind. He is sorry for her forlorn condition; he loves her; he believes that her vagaries are intellectual rather than

emotional; and in spite of the fact that she has played opera music on Sunday to scandalise her hostess, proposes to her, and wins her under the light of the moon in the garden.

The complications begin when he is married. Ashe is making his way in the political world. He has left behind that period of his life when he had liked to have the "reputation of an idler," whilst he was in reality "a plodding and unwearied student"; but he has remained in that state of mind when "to avow an enthusiasm or an affection generally seemed to him an indelicacy." A genial and tactful Dean, a man of the world who figures frequently in the story, had early noticed his suavity in argument, the lack of passion which seemed the one quality needed to make him great. He had determined above all things in his married life to give complete and dignified freedom to his wife, and his nature would never permit him to question or suspect her doings or her motives. So he smiled at her frolics, put up with her extravagances, and did not even rebuke her when she offended and insulted the Prime Minister under whom he served. Not till she seemed to have fallen under the spell of Geoffrey Cliffe and had scandalised society, did he fully realise that she was ruining his political career. "The thing would right itself in time," he supposed. And meantime he accepted his lot, was glad of her penitences, and ignored the situation. In long passages of analysis Mrs. Ward becomes the critic of

her own characters. This is the vein in which she writes:

> Ashe with his critical sense for ever playing on himself and others; with the touch of moral shirking that belonged to his inmost nature; and, above all, with his half-humorous, half-bitter consciousness that whoever else might be a hero, he was none; Ashe, at least, could and would do nothing of the sort. That he should begin now to play the tyrannous or jealous husband would make him ridiculous both in his own eyes and other people's.

The situation goes from bad to worse. On one occasion Kitty had nearly run away with Geoffrey Cliffe; on another occasion an impertinent note about the Prime Minister falls into the hands of that august person himself; again she scandalises a select company by indiscreet dancing; she cannot avoid numberless flirtations; and, while always loving her husband, always beloved by him, she more than once brings him to the verge of ruin. At last, when her child has died, when he has taken her away to Italy for peace and rest, her crowning folly appears. She writes a book, in which she satirises openly all her husband's friends and colleagues, with the mistaken idea of portraying him as a hero; he finds the book, goes to England, stops its further publication, and offers his resignation of the Home Secretaryship. In her despair she leaves him, joins herself to Geoffrey Cliffe, and is only reunited to her husband, now Prime Minister, at her death.

The book has many merits. The complicated

problem is worked out with great skill. The catastrophe was from the beginning inevitable, for the relation between the correct, discreet, bland statesman and the childishly tempestuous Kitty could not have continued; to avert disaster William Ashe must either have abandoned his career and devoted himself to his wife, or he must have acted in the undignified manner of a nursery tyrant—and neither of these courses was compatible with his character. The impulsive undisciplined Kitty is portrayed consistently and sympathetically.

But when we have said that Mrs. Ward follows in the tradition of George Eliot we must notice a very important difference. She has taken the great field of political life as the background of her story; it is in politics that the real vocation of William Ashe lies; the larger interests it supplies are the forces which cut him off from the sympathy of his wife. Now if George Eliot had been handling this theme (it is sufficient to recall "Felix Holt") we may imagine how she would have represented those great interests; how she would have entered into the heart of the actual problems which absorbed Ashe, and made these problems live for us; how she would have portrayed the bigger emotions which move men in the arena—and would thus have made us understand the contrast between the public and private life of her hero. But Mrs. Ward is not really interested in this political life which absorbs Ashe; she tells us it is there; she tells us it is absorb-

ing; but she does not tell us what it is, or explain how it moves him. It is only a negative fact in her book, the fact which makes Ashe an inattentive husband, a cold lover. What Mrs. Ward does really care about is Kitty's passionate character, her craving to be loved, admired and amused; the real emotions portrayed in this book are none other than the fashionable love emotions which play so conspicuous a part in our drawing-room literature.

It will be seen that the modern psychological novel almost always takes the form of a scientific problem. Compare some simple question such as —What happens when potassium is thrown into water? The unskilled person who makes the experiment replies, that it floats on the surface, catches fire, sparkles and explodes with luminous vigour; the more skilled person will explain to you how the potassium, coming into contact with the compound of oxygen and hydrogen, enters into a new chemical combination. It is just such a question which Mrs. Humphry Ward puts in "The Marriage of William Ashe." "What will happen when, under given circumstances, a man of Ashe's temperament is married to a woman of Kitty's temperament?" The answer is given in an elaborate complex of experiment and explanation.

So too in Mr. Horace Annesley Vachell's "The Face of Clay," the question is put—"What will happen to a man of artistic temperament who, having been born under a peculiarly strict moral code,

violates that code? And secondly, how will he be regarded by certain other persons, some of whom have been brought up under that code, and others not?"

"The Face of Clay" is typical not only of Mr. Vachell's own work but also of a whole group of novels which are conscientiously written and fairly readable. The *dénouement* is not equal to the rest of the story, and the *motif* is inadequate. Yet the plot is so arranged and developed that during three-fourths of the book our interest is increased and concentrated. It is often said that the male novelist cannot depict a woman. Mr. Vachell makes bold to tell his story from the point of view of his heroine, to portray her feelings and development, and to present the other characters as subsidiary to her. In doing this with some success he has caught the feminine point of view much too well, and read into his men's characters motives and reasons which as a rule weigh only with women. Téphany's lover, soured by the thought that his mistaken conduct has led a sensitive woman to commit suicide, regards himself as no less than a murderer, and this extreme view of his guilt is shared by the other persons in the book.

The scene of the story is laid in the little fishing village of Pont-Aven, in Brittany. Téphany, the heroine, brought up here among artists, is left an orphan at the age of fifteen, and sets out for England, leaving behind her Michael Ossory, the young artist

who has already become her lover. Ten years later, now a famous singer, she returns to her native country, to visit the grave of her parents, to meet again the Breton people whom she loved, and with the secret hope of hearing again of the man who, years before, had suddenly and strangely stopped his correspondence with her. Accompanied by a devoted companion she comes to the little inn which she had once known so well. There she sees several pictures painted by Michael, all rich in promise. Yvonne, the landlady, tells her all the news of the district, but frowns when the name of Michael is mentioned. Yes, he had given great promise, but he had never "arrived." He lived the uncouth life of a hermit, repelling all advances, and apparently "lost" so far as his art was concerned. Téphany, who is accustomed to admiration and personal triumphs, indulges in the feminine assurance that through her he may be "found" again.

She goes to visit Michael at his studio, and finds him bearded and untidy, reserved and cautious, but grateful because she has called, though he does not hint at the cause which had kept him from writing. He shows her some of his paintings, and her artistic training enables her to see that, though often unfinished and strange, they are great works. By chance she takes up the picture of a beautiful child, and, by his sudden agitation, perceives that she has unwittingly touched upon his secret. On another

occasion, in his preoccupied, rapt manner, he shows her a plaster cast which had been taken.

"Why—why—this"—she examined it attentively—"this is the child grown into a woman. What a lovely creature!"

"Ah, you see it, the beauty, the perfection of form. Well, what else do you see?"

"You must give me time."

Téphany stared at the work, while Michael gnawed his moustache.

"There's a look of La Giaconda."

"Ah! you have recognised that. I'm glad I asked you to come. If you see that——" he broke off abruptly, and then continued: "Turn it very slowly, so that the light falls on the left side of the mouth. There, there. Now she looks different, eh?"

Such anxiety underlay the sharp "Eh" that Téphany hesitated before she replied slowly: "I don't see La Giaconda now."

"The smile is still there?"

"Yes, but it's the smile of the child—a derisive smile."

Everything in this story is supposed to turn upon the character of the Bretons, simple, superstitious people, who have grafted Roman Catholicism on their ancient pagan faiths. Even the devoted village priest, himself a Breton, feels something of awe in the presence of the dread traditions which have descended from antiquity and been kept alive by the Celtic imagination. These people, ever in touch with the horror of sudden death at sea, believe in "Death as a person, who may be seen and heard and touched," and in "Death's familiar, the Ankou, who gleans the awful harvest." Devoted to their

religion, they make its ritual supplement their pagan beliefs. The person who dies a violent death, or has not been buried in consecrated ground, wanders, like the unburied of the Romans, in an intermediate state between life and death, and is never far from the living. Their last centimes are spent in masses for their departed friends. Poor Yannik, a young girl whom Carne, the Californian artist, has wished to paint, explains to Téphany why she will have no dowry.

"He gives the big pieces to grand-mère, and she spends them——"

"Not on drink?"

"On masses for the souls of my father and uncles."

Contrasted with this superstitious Breton temperament is the character of the artist, intent first upon achieving artistic effect, and putting everything second to that. To a Bretonne girl it is a degradation to sit as a model, even with her coif on her shoulders. But Yannik's scruples are overcome by the cajolery of Carne. The situation revives the whole tragedy of Michael's life. It was upon just such an occasion as this that, eager to catch the exact expression of a girl frightened and alarmed, and to produce a great picture worthy of his mistress, he had "accepted all" from his model, and, as he afterwards thought, had thus become the cause of her suicide, and of the plaster cast which had been taken in the Morgue.

In all these processes by which the story develops we may see how the novelist turns everything inside out, like a bag. He does not plunge straight into his story like Fielding, or Scott, or Dickens, but everything must be seen under a given atmosphere, from a given standpoint, under given conditions; and the result follows under a fixed law miscalled probability. He first has to explain the psychological environment, the temperament of the Bretons; he then explains the temperament of Michael Ossory and other individuals; makes certain allowances for cross-emotions; and then works out the problem like a sum in algebra. It follows that if he makes a single trip in his calculations the solution must be vitiated and the reader disappointed. Mr. Vachell has tripped at least twice: first, in miscalculating the measure of the artist's guilt, and secondly, in making his men think, act, and cross-examine themselves like women.

I must not be understood to mean that the psychological method in fiction is either good or bad in itself. It is a type, admitting of every degree of merit and demerit within its own limits, and it is a type from which it would be folly to try and escape in this self-conscious age. We *are* self-conscious, and nothing can make us otherwise, nothing can give us the glorious spontaneity and outwardness of the Homeric and the Elizabethan ages. I am simply trying to show some laws to

which that type does inevitably conform, as inevitably as we are all the children of our parents.

Much of the work of Mr. Robert Hichens might be discussed under this head, and I shall choose as my last example the novel entitled "The Garden of Allah." Like several works which will be discussed from other points of view, it might have been put in the class which I have named "fugitives." For in "The Garden of Allah" Mr. Hichens seems to fly from the close social atmosphere of London with which many of his novels are impregnated. Here he shows us how acute has been the longing to escape, to leave behind the "black spot on the sun—humanity, God's mistake in the great plan of Creation." What he paints for us now is the romance of the desert, with the mysterious, alluring truth which he seeks to find in its illimitable expanses.

The heroine of the story, Domini Enfilden, has just reached an acute stage of religious and intellectual disillusionment. Her life has been made bitter by her family history. An agnostic father had loved a woman, a Catholic, and accepted her religion. After years of married life he had been deserted by his wife, had in consequence hated the religion he had adopted for her sake, and urged his daughter to do the same. At length, released, Domini sets out to travel in search of freedom and peace. She is thirty-two years of age, independent by nature, and strong of physique. She

is bound for a little town in an oasis in the African desert. With precise description founded upon an evident desire to leave out no impression of sky, or grass, or the tiniest object, Mr. Hichens tells the story of her progress towards Beni-Mora into the desert:

> It seemed as if God were putting forth His hand to withdraw gradually all things of His creation, all the furniture He had put into the great Palace of the world; as if He meant to leave it empty and utterly naked.

A succession of luminous impressions passes before the mind of Domini. Scene after scene brought out the new sense of freedom and remoteness, of mystery and ecstasy. At Beni-Mora she seems to find the "garden of peace that realised her dreams." And again:

> Cleanliness—what a blessed condition that was, a condition to breed bravery. In this early morning hour Beni-Mora looked magically clean. Domini thought of the desperate dirt of London mornings, of the sooty air brooding above black trees and greasy pavements. Surely it was difficult to be clean of soul there. Here it would be easy. One would tune one's lyre in accord with Nature and be as a singing palm tree beside a water-spring.

There are two people who colour her life vividly here. One is Count Anteoni, a sort of magnificent but quieter, more meditative Count of Monte Cristo, who has built a beautiful garden, his "thinking place," as he calls it, verging upon the desert. Here Domini loves to wander and look out across the

ocean of sand; and begins to realise to the full how "Africa is as fierce, as full of meaning, as a furnace." She listens to the significant trivialities of conversation. The Arab guide remarks gaily:

"I have been married twice and divorced twice."

Domini turned from the window and looked at Smain with astonishment. He was smelling his rose like a dreamy child.

"You have been divorced twice?"

"Yes. Now I will show Madame the smoking-room."

And again, in the garden:

A thin and remote sound stole to them down the alley, clear and frail as the note of a night bird.

"It is Larbi playing upon the flute. He is in love. That is why he plays when he ought to be watering the flowers and raking out the sand."

But of first importance in the story is the personality of Androvsky. From the outset Domini is struck by his presence, though not wholly favourably. The author becomes slightly histrionic when he represents Androvsky, first as guilty of an act of inexplicable rudeness, and then with his face magnificently outlined against a weird glow of the setting sun. The man is awkward of movement, heavy-footed, strange in his actions, but vehement; evidently a miserable man, but strong and purposeful. Domini is struck by the fact that after a long acquaintance one could not tell "whether or not he was a gentleman." As she had fallen under the "spell of Africa," so he seems to fall under her spell. He

evinces a horror of priests, of prayer, of all that savours of religion or worship, and goes out of his way to avoid the French priest approaching him on the road. Induced by a ruse to meet him, he is silent and uncouth, till Count Anteoni precipitates a crisis by saying, "Mahomet thought too much of the body," and Androvsky replies:

"I doubt if most good men, or men who want to be good, think enough about the body, consider it enough. I have thought that. I think it still."

As he finished, he stared at the priest, almost menacingly. Then, as if moved by an afterthought, he added:

"As to Mahomet, I know very little about him. But perhaps he obtained his great influence by recognising that the bodies of men are of great importance, of tremendous—tremendous importance."

The mystery of his melancholy and his reserve is not for a long time solved—not until after Domini has become his wife. Together they have embarked upon the great desert which had seemed to summon her to freedom and a knowledge of God. This journey southwards over the Sahara is told with all Mr. Hichens's skill in imaginary, purely imaginary, description. He has created a fantastic, perhaps false, atmosphere of breathless wonder which is to Domini the voice of God and gives her the idea of happiness and satisfaction. The story of Androvsky's previous life as a monk, his sin, his hatred of religious symbols and the dualism in his character cannot be dwelt upon here. Sufficient to say that

the man and woman determine to renounce their love and seek to realise the good through sacrifice.

Few books could show better than this to what extremes the spirit of psychological analysis may take us. The story turns on the mental and moral history of both the man and the woman; the mental and moral issues concerned in their meeting; and, most curiously of all, the mental and moral effects of the glaring, personified desert, the sun, the flowers, and the grass, upon the mental and moral tissue of the husband and wife. The novelist attempts to give to each note on a flute and each petal on a flower a significance which is measured only by its effect upon character. This is "modernism" with a vengeance.

CHAPTER VIII

POPULARITY

"If you could tell me what it is that makes a book 'catch on,'" I once heard a publisher remark, "you have told me how to make a fortune. It is just what I want to know but have never yet found out." No publisher or critic has discovered what precisely it is that makes a book sell by scores of thousands, that brings it into sudden demand at all the libraries, and turns it into a subject of drawing-room conversation. How often have we seen a book which shows little knowledge of life, which makes no serious attempt to interpret human nature, and is perhaps indifferently or even badly written, suddenly become the rage among that great public which devours contemporary literature! Many other books appearing at the same time may show equal literary merit, while only this one, apparently through the merest caprice of fortune, has been selected by the multitude.

The publisher can tell us some of the conditions necessary to popularity. Dozens of books may be issued annually having the ingredients of a "popular novel," but they miss fire through lack of opportunity

or because they were not pushed just in the right way, or were not topical at the moment of publication, or were not widely reviewed, advertised, or patronised by Royalty, or because in some other way they lost their chance. But it cannot be said in so many words just where the quality lies that makes for popularity.

There are certain obvious qualities which are known to contribute to, though they do not necessarily constitute, a "success." For instance, a book must be "popularly" written, that is to say it must be in language which may commend itself to the intelligence of comparatively uneducated people. It must also make an appeal to emotions shared by the generality of men; and as its readers are more naturally moved by real life than by literature, the written word must probably be more violent and extreme than is necessary to an exact account of real emotion, or it will not have a sufficiently forcible effect upon those whose ear is not so accustomed to the subtleties of literature as their hearts are accustomed to the direct appeal of reality. When the facts of life are made to pass through the glass of literature, the ordinary man, not skilled in its use, sees but dimly; and so the glass must have a high refracting power if it is to be of any use to him.

Let us see what can be discovered from two typical examples, one of which must certainly be a book by Miss Marie Corelli. We are at once confronted with the problem of a writer who, without

any striking intellectual power, without exceptional originality of view, without any special knowledge, possessed indeed of imagination, but not a subtle imagination, is nevertheless read, considered, and quoted by masses of people in England and America. Suppose we take such a book as "Free Opinions Freely Expressed," which is a bundle of twenty-seven short essays dealing with many acute social problems—society as it is, modern religious life, wealth and the vulgarity of wealth, the relations between men and women, Americanism in England, the baneful influence of the Press, conventionalism, cant and the decadent soul of the nation. Here are questions which we all discuss over afternoon tea; they concern the hypocrisies which we are all guilty of and all agree in condemning; the absurdities which we laugh at; the insincerities we loathe; the vulgarity of wealth which even the poorest despise. All of these questions Miss Corelli discusses with prophetic assurance, repeating what every one has been saying for years, pronouncing her *ipse dixit* as if nobody had ever thought of these grand truths before. Here, for instance, is an essay on "Pagan London." She takes her cue from the Venerable Archdeacon Sinclair, who had been speaking of London. "A pagan city," he said, or was reported to say—"with churches glimmering here and there like fairy lamps twinkling in the spaces of darkness upon a lawn." "Fairy lamps!" cries the author in an outburst of indignation (accepting

Archdeacon Sinclair as a spokesman of the Church cause !) :

> Fairy lamps ! Multiply them by scores, good Archdeacon ! quadruple them in every corner of this "pagan" city of ours, over which the heart of every earnest thinker must yearn with a passion of love and pity, and they shall be no use whatever to light the blackness of one soul's midnight of despair ! "Pagan London !" The roaring, rushing crowd, the broad, deep river of suffering, loving, working, struggling humanity, sweeping on, despite itself, to the limitless sea of Death—every unit in the mass craving. . . .

And so on. But why speak of "pagan London"? asks Miss Corelli. "What if one spoke of 'pagan clergy'?"

> What of the surpliced hypocrites who preach to others what they never even try to practise ? What of certain vicious and worldly clerical bon vivants, who may constantly be met with in the houses of wealthy and titled persons, "clothed in fine linen and faring sumptuously every day," talking unsavoury society scandal with as much easy glibness as any dissolute "lay" decadent that ever cozened a man's wife away from the path of honour in the tricky disguise of a "soul"? What of the spiteful, small-minded, quarrelsome "local" parsons, who, instead of fostering kindness, neighbourliness, goodwill, and unity among their parishioners, set them all by the ears and play the petty tyrant with a domineering obstinacy which is rather worse than pagan, being purely barbarous.

What is the real "need"? "Men! Men of thought—men of heart—men of true conviction, ardent faith, passionate exaltation, and unceasing devotion." Miss Corelli, in fact, quite rightly objects to bad parsons and likes good ones.

Her method is the same when she discusses "The Vulgarity of Wealth." Who can fail to agree with her when she denounces the materialism of the age, the rule of Mammon, "the insane worship of wealth"? She detests the "yell of the huckster in stocks and shares," the "Yankee trade-octopus, stretching out greedy tentacles in every direction," the contempt for the "Poor Gentleman," the "Boorish plutocracy," rejoicing in bridge and motor-cars, the "Idolatry of Money-bags."

> Apart from the manner in which certain rich men spend their wealth there is something in an overplus of riches which is distinctly "out of drawing," and lop-sided. It is a false note in the musical scale. Just as a woman, by wearing too great a number of jewels, vulgarises whatever personal beauty she may possess by the flagrant exhibition of valuables and bad taste together, so does a man who has no other claim upon society than that of mere wealth, appear as a kind of monstrosity and deformity in the general quality and equilibrium of Nature. When such a man's career is daily seen to be nothing more than a constant pursuit of his own selfish ends, regardless of truth, honour, high principle, and consideration for his fellow men, he becomes even more than a man-camel with a golden hump—he is an offence and a danger to the community.

In the denunciatory manner of a prophetess uttering with divine fury her oracular messages, Miss Corelli passes from subject to subject, scattering her Sybilline leaves, fastening upon the evils of this wicked world, and calling on the ungodly to repent in sackcloth and ashes. That fearful "American Bounder" who hies from a country "colossal, stu-

pendous, and pre-eminent, look what a creature he is! He may frequently be found in residence in the fourth floor back of a swagger hotel, occupying a 'bed-sitting-room' littered with guide-books, 'yellow' journalism, and dubious French novels, with an impressionist sketch of the newest Paris *danseuse* in her most suggestive want of attire set conspicuously forward for inspection." Or again, reflect on the "farcical and futile view of life that is taken by thousands of European and American people in our present period," and the "decadence of the drama, of art, of literature, of politics, and of social conduct." Or Miss Corelli adopts the *rôle* of the "small country M.P.'s wife." "I thank Thee," she cries:

> I thank Thee that Thou hast made of that Supreme Ass, my Husband, a Member of the Government, so that, despite his utter lack of wit and hopeless incompetency, he may at least pass muster for having brains in a particularly brainless constituency.

Finally she appeals to the poor, battered, insulted "Soul of the Nation." In what shameless manner a daily paper, "in sagacious appreciation of free 'copy,'" started a "public discussion on the religious faith of this Christian Empire!"

> What a deplorable contrast we make in our pandering to the lowest tastes of the mob when without a word of protest, we permit our "Spirits of the Dead"—the Spirits of our gallant forefathers who fought for the pure Faith of England and sealed it with their blood—to be degraded and insulted by a cheap newspaper discussion on the most private and sacred emotions of the

soul, as though such a discussion were of a character suited to take its place among police cases and quack medical advertisements.

But supposing the reader for a moment breaks through the "spell" in which the author has been seeking to enfold him, and foregoes what she calls the "unspeakable delight and charm of giving one's self to one's author," he will notice that, though most of what she says is true, it is somewhat out of perspective, and so far as it is just it is painfully obvious. Her plan is to single out the objectionable things in modern life, and present them as if they were the only things. She errs in her picture of society just as the realistic novelist is apt to err in his picture of persons: she singles out things which are ugly, mean, sordid, and contemptible, and though often photographing them with an accurate attention to repellent details, forgets that to present them alone is to falsify facts, that the things which are stirred by the muckrake are not all the things of the universe.

Miss Corelli admittedly addresses her remarks *ad populum*. Her success is, perhaps, like that of the Hyde Park orator. She pronounces truths which it would be folly not to know, and she pronounces them truculently. Many people necessarily applaud, because they are gratified to find that their own intellectual stock-in-trade is shouted out by a distinguished writer as if it constituted a great and novel discovery. To state the obvious violently, to attack public scandals with clear and fluent invective,

to say what the man in the street says, but to say it a little more rhetorically—that is her art.

Miss Corelli is, then, a frank, avowed demagogue. By instinct rather than deliberation she says the things which please the crowd, never leading, showing no discrimination between the important and the unimportant, catching at just those themes which are already before the public, and repeating in a more persistent, more emphatic, more rhetorical way what the commonplace man is always saying.

Her chief virtues are vigour and vehemence ; her chief weakness is a tendency to think that noisy sensationalism is a sufficient substitute for thought. But there is something in her which enables us to understand at once why she is popular ;—she has tremendous vitality. We may not respect her intellect, we may not glow under the warm light of her imagination, but we are bound to admit that she is strenuous.

Now it is hard to find even strenuousness in the works of another much more puzzling type of popular novelist, Mrs. Katherine Cecil Thurston. This writer seems to be one of those strange literary phenomena which only the eccentricity of the twentieth century could have evolved. I do not merely allude to the fact that she has acquired a great reputation and a prodigious circulation in an uncommonly short space of time. Other writers in other ages have done that. Nor is it that she has strong positive qualities which set literary rules at

defiance, thundering trivialities with the spendthrift passion of a Miss Corelli. What is more extraordinary is that while she sometimes writes quite nicely, while she plans situations which the reviewers, writing of the hack novelists, speak of as "strong" and "well-conceived," there is yet no mark of distinction in her style, no great aptitude for character drawing—nothing, in fact, to differentiate her from a score or so of living novelists whose volumes sell by tens where hers sell by thousands. Her writing can scarcely be called either very good or very bad. "The Circle," "John Chilcote, M.P." and "The Gambler" seem to have been floated to the surface by chance eddies in the current of taste.

The main idea of "John Chilcote" might have been praiseworthy had it been original. Though there was no subtlety of character drawing, and the conclusion was weak, the story was consecutive and compact, and not marred by any too evident ambition to be great. "The Gambler" has not all the merits of "John Chilcote." We may pass over frequent lapses of style, such as "this small girl . . . was something infinitely more different to deal with." But the note of bombastic melodrama which appears in the very first chapter is harder to correct. The scene is the south-east of Ireland. James Milbanke, middle-aged bachelor, archæologist and pedant, is being whirled through the night-air in a trap, bound for the house of his old college friend, Denis Asshlin, whom he has not seen for thirty years. "Has his

friend changed?" [in thirty-years] is the thought which obsesses his spirit, as he passes under "the black shadow of overhanging trees." "Has your master altered much in thirty years?" is the question which he solemnly propounds and repeats to the aged retainer who drives him. As he approaches the house, "something unusual, something faintly prophetic, and only vaguely comprehended touched his prosaic nature at that moment." And later: "Indisputably, unmistakably, Asshlin had changed."

"And in what lay that change? That was the question that he put to himself as he sat on the bed."

Here is a blood-stirring opening in the most effusive manner of the late Mr. Guy Boothby. The reader will anticipate that something else besides the thirty years had changed Denis Asshlin. His impetuous, high-spirited daughter, aged fifteen, describes her father:

> Sometimes he's gloomy and depressed, other times he's wild, like to-night. And when he's wild, he's mad for cards. Oh, you don't know what it's like! It's like being a drunkard—only different—and worse. When he's like that, he'd play with any one—for anything. Last week he had a dreadful man—a horse-dealer from Muskeere—staying here with him for three days. They played cards every night—played till three or four in the morning. Father lost all the ready money in the house, and nearly emptied the stables.

Milbanke is a sort of silent spectator who witnesses the tragedy of a household. One is reminded of the situation in Stevenson's "Master of Ballan-

trae," when old Mackellar is made to look on with pained sympathy and frequent bungling at the downfall of his friends. But the tact and skill with which that spectator is used by Stevenson contrasts with the clumsy picture of Mrs. Thurston's middle-aged pedant. His rhapsodies about the exuberant young Irishman whom once he had known, and his pain at the sight of the feverish gambler into which he has degenerated are set forth without the delicacy necessary to arouse the feeling of pity. After three more years the gambler dies, and four chapters are devoted to a morbid account of his death and the funeral ceremonies.

But the shock of death is as nothing to the shock of a marriage which takes place between Milbanke, aged sixty-five, and Clodagh, aged eighteen. This young lady marries from the same feelings which would make her pay a debt of honour. She is whirled off to Italy, where for four years she meekly and submissively follows her old husband on dull archæological expeditions. Desperate at her monotonous life, she hails with joy the prospect of a visit to Venice, where for a few days she falls a prey to the excitements of smart society, as represented by a sociable Lady Frances, a wicked Lord Deerehurst, and others, and remains uninfluenced by the good, slightly priggish Sir Walter Gore, who lectures her upon her companions, and has eyes which "looked out upon the world with the quiet reliance that seems a steadfast reflection of the steadfast ocean."

Clodagh relapses into dullness until the welcome death of her relic-hunting husband leaves her with a plentiful income and a desire to enjoy life.

Then come a couple of months of "gambling," for Mrs. Thurston has made it pretty evident that the vice of the father is to reappear in the daughter. She plunges into reckless expenditure of money, borrows of a friend, repays it out of money left in trust for her sister, and again borrows from the wicked Lord Deerehurst. This nearly puts an end to her engagement with the stern Sir Walter Gore, who has discovered his love for her; but by a happy explanation all comes well, and we hear no more of her rapidly developed passion for gambling. "'Hannah!'" she cries, in the closing page of the book, "'Hannah! there is a God after all!—there is a God!' She swayed suddenly, and the old servant, rushing forward, caught her in her arms."

Apparently Mrs. Thurston feels that she has reached that stage in a literary career when it is necessary to become prophetic—to flay society, to castigate social vices, to cast down the idols set up in high places. This laudable object is scarcely achieved. The plot does not really turn upon the vice of gambling, which is dragged into the story neck and crop, and as an occasional trait in the heroine seems to be of less moral significance than if it had been a pimple on her nose. Other people in this book are allowed to "gamble" to their hearts' content without suffering any apparent harm. Only Clodagh

and her father are gibbeted for their hereditary vice.

Mrs. Thurston seldom writes a chapter without one or more sentences which betray sententiousness in thought and ineptitude of expression. We gather her idea of a "poet" from "Milbanke was no poet, yet the scene impressed him."

There are such unblushingly trite phrases as "Clodagh Asshlin entered upon a new phase of that precarious condition that we call life." Here is an example of a clever retort: "I have seen a lot of unauthentic relics," says the fair heroine. The hero replies impressively: "And I a lot of unauthentic life." A beautiful and high-spirited married lady, who has been travelling for four years and has lived twenty-two, gains for the first time the "knowledge that, within herself, she possessed some subtle and previously unrealised power that could compel a man's regard."

In the first half of the book we at least expect to get some stirring melodrama, yet the plot fades off into the twaddle of the ordinary society novel. Though at many points our interest is aroused by a promising scene, expectation is disappointed, and we are diverted to a new and equally aimless episode. The style is undistinguished. We are rather told what the characters are than made to feel them.

The success of Mrs. Thurston baffles critical analysis. Those who know the popular taste might have foretold that Miss Marie Corelli would rise to

the surface by virtue of her strenuous energy. There is no such quality in Mrs. Thurston. We are bound to believe that the vast reading public of to-day lends itself to literary gambling ; that out of many mediocrities one more fortunate than her compeers will, by a lucky throw of the dice, come out first in popular esteem.

What that popular esteem is passes the powers of definition. Innumerable half-formed tastes have been developed, each on the lines of its owner's strongest rudimentary passions vitiated by a bowing acquaintance with reading and writing. If the man whose activity is limited to the mental feats of the counting-house should seek his relaxation in a novel, he will find himself compelled to pass judgment on emotions outside his ken ; and he will give a counting-house judgment. The lady who wears her wisdom as well as her heart upon her sleeve, and maintains the *rôle* of a *littérateur* among her illiterate friends will be sure to admire epigrammatic and foolish writers. A significant thought expressed in fine and appropriate language will hardly commend itself to the person habituated to the slang of the tipster and the bar-maid, or to another type of person immersed in the verbal and unreal atmosphere of sectarian religion. There are a hundred, a thousand, different classes of the community whose members are shut off from the finer emotions and the keener perceptions which are needed for the appreciation of art, and indeed for all that is beautiful in the world. But these millions,

the pitiful majority of the British Empire, as yet but slightly versed in the rudiments of knowledge, have just been inspired with a desire for the entertainment of written words, and they demand books—books of a kind ; they breed writers, and they raise up popular favourites in accordance with the curious laws of their own inclination and of successful advertisement. From such a chaotic mass of unformed tastes it is hopeless to generalise, unless it be to say that as our popular taste, based upon a crude and hitherto unsatisfactory popular education, is still in the making, so it is that our popular literature, in its present state of perpetual transition, must continue to fluctuate with the moral and æsthetic fluctuations of the commonplace mind. It remains to be seen whether the common mind will ever cease to be commonplace.

CHAPTER IX

THE APOSTLES OF PROTEST

"THE question to be debated was, whether the *Yahoos* should be exterminated from the face of the earth?" Though we have no Dean Swift to-day to describe the vileness of the human race with the delicate satire of Gulliver, every town and suburb has its rhetoricians who declaim against the horrors of modern society. Their anger however is directed not so much against mankind as against the conditions imposed upon it by its temporal and spiritual rulers. The critics whom we have now to consider both witness the ravages of the scientific spirit and are themselves impelled by it. When we say that this age is peculiarly prone to self-analysis and self-criticism, we are also saying that it must be peculiarly conscious of its own discrepancies, of the vast difference between the real and the ideal; that it is superbly pessimistic in holding that evil is preponderant. Indeed the mere fact that the majority of men believe the world to be an unpleasant place is a fact which undoubtedly makes it more unpleasant. To be conscious of evil is to suffer evil, and we are supremely conscious of all that we suffer.

And so the lightness and carelessness of younger societies have been replaced by a painful earnestness and an exaggerated idea of the importance of what we do. We watch the progress of our society with the same sort of intentness with which an anxious scientist might watch his experiments with retorts and test-tubes and Bunsen burners.

When Carlyle proclaimed the magnificence of the French Revolution and reasserted the Rights of Man and the divinity of man, he surely knew that he was championing a losing cause. The Revolution destroyed feudalism and the privilege of blood, but it had a stronger foe to fight which grew out of the Industrial Revolution, the power of wealth, the tendency to use machines and to make men into machines, to turn the whole of society into one complex mass of machinery which by courtesy it called an organism. This new master was bigger and stronger than the old; the whole institution of society became its own tyrant; and it enslaved not so much the bodies as the souls and imaginations of men. The habits, prejudices, and conventions to which mankind is prone have been hardening the new chains. Carlyle protested against them; Ruskin threw all his eloquence against the increasing forces of materialism and custom; and to-day there is a perpetual stream of literature which urges this protest against the universal conditions of life. This revolt is part of the very air we breathe. Carlyle and Ruskin had the eccentricity of genius when they

wrote, but their *saeva indignatio* has become common to the rank and file of modern writers, who, if not trivially content with modern life, if not themselves too much bound up in the net of modernism, must denounce the awful limitations which our society imposes on freedom of action, on thought and imagination.

This protest is not confined to Great Britain. The evil against which it is directed is more aggravated in America than in England ; and indeed the United States, with their vast enterprises, their moral sciences, their positivist spirit, are the *fons et origo* of all that is most imposing and most alarming in civilisation. We may see the same protest even in Russia, where a decaying feudal system has been brought into sharp contact with the new system based on capital and scientific knowledge. We may go into the East Ends of English cities, and see workmen bound to their monotonous tasks ; into the suburbs, and see the clerk whose soul has been destroyed by routine ; into the wealthy colonies around London, where the *nouveaux riches* have no standard of excellence beyond the size of their neighbours' houses and the horse-power of their motor-cars ; or into the more fashionable quarters where leisure is the cause of boredom, stupidity, or unenterprising vice. These things, familiar to us in England, have their counterparts in America and all the civilised countries of the world ; and what is at the same time the worst and the best of it is that we

know and feel the fatuity and the monstrosity, and that dozens of our writers are spending their energy in denunciation, whilst others are devoting their ingenious minds to solving the problem of reform.

Here I can do no more than instance a few books which show, first, the protest against the modern organisation of society, and second, the attempt to philosophise and to sum up the situation as a preliminary to reform. And it must be remembered that I am not choosing books necessarily for their high literary quality or their intellectual depth, but for the representative way in which they reveal contemporary modes of thought.

I begin with a book called "War of the Classes," by Mr. Jack London, whom I shall have occasion to discuss in connection with another of his books under another aspect of my subject. He is a powerful, impulsive writer, who is violent with a violence that comes from genuine indignation, and sensational because he seems to have known the sensations of bitter and intense experience. In his own way Mr. London dwells on the familiar subject of the opposition of classes in the modern state. The great trade unions and the men who compose them "are in open antagonism with the capitalist class, while the manifestoes of their leaders state that the struggle is one which can never end until the capitalist class is exterminated." The Socialists are organising the forces of Labour into a united body, the units of which accept Socialism as a holy crusade, preaching

the cause of their class as something higher than patriotism, carrying on the old warfare once waged between patrician and plebeian, between king and nobles, between nobles and *bourgeoisie*—" to-day the struggle is one between the triumphant *bourgeoisie* and the rising proletariat."

I do not wish to dwell here on Mr. London's Socialistic ideas, which are not original in themselves though they are strenuously and cogently expressed. Sufficient to note that in giving voice to the popular discontent with modern life it is the present system of property and industry which he singles out for attack. The class struggle is ingrained in that system, he argues rhetorically but reasonably in his essays on the " tramp " and the " scab." What, he asks, has produced that class of idlers known as tramps? Have they any possible excuse? The records of the experience of the General Superintendent of Police at Chicago " reiterated the lesson that the vast majority of these wanderers are of the class with whom a life of vagrancy is a chosen means of living without work." But consider the system which has turned them out, says Mr. London. In an average period of prosperity in trade a definite number of men are employed; in a slack period men are turned off; in a good period more must be taken on. It is to the interest of the employer to foster the existence of surplus labour, which may be taken on at times of prosperity and used to replace the ordinary workers in the event of a strike. The author adduces striking

instances to prove that such a surplus labour army always exists, and "the conclusion is reached that the less fit and less efficient, or the unfit and inefficient, compose the surplus labour army."

> Here are to be found the men who have tried and failed, the men who cannot hold jobs—the plumber apprentice who could not become a journeyman, and the plumber journeyman too clumsy and dull to retain employment; switchmen who wreck trains; clerks who cannot balance books; blacksmiths who lame horses; lawyers who cannot plead; in short, the failures of every trade and profession, and failures, many of them, in divers trades and professions. Failure is writ large, and in their wretchedness they bear the stamp of social disapprobation. Common work, any kind of work, wherever or however they can obtain it, is their portion.

Under the present system, put it how you will, "some one has to be a tramp." "The social pit . . . breeds criminals, men who prefer being beasts of prey to being beasts of work."

The Americans have invented that hideous word—the "scab"—to express that necessary outcome of modern competition, "one who gives more value for the same price than another," whose aim it is to supplant another by working harder for the same money, to make life possible for himself by making it harder for others. Apart from a few lucky creatures—kings and land-owners and the irresponsible "coupon-clipping class, which hires its managers and brains to invest the money usually left it by its ancestors"—"all the rest, at one time or another in their lives, are scabs, at one time or another are

engaged in giving more for a certain price than any one else."

It is a dismal but not fanciful picture of our "tooth-and-nail" society which Mr. London has drawn. Because we do not every moment heed these operations, or reflect on the upward and downward flow of the units which make the masses of society, none the less they are for ever with us and about us. The lowest stratum into which the utter failures are shed is only the uncovered drainage of a system whereby there is waste from top to bottom.

To define the disease is the first step towards cure. If Mr. London loses in definiteness when he comes to speak of a remedy, he is one of those who have done something in helping to diagnose the ailment in language which can be popularly understood.

It would be impossible to write on this subject without saying something about the remarkable book which so profoundly stirred the people of England and America—"The Jungle," by Mr. Upton Sinclair. As a novel, as a work of art, much might be urged against it. But it touched on some of the burning facts of modern life ; it described to us in all its repellent detail just that which is causing daily fear and horror to scores of millions in the modern world ; it expressed exactly that revulsion which half the civilised world feels always, but dumbly, against the gigantic oppression of society, the system we have reared out of ourselves more mighty than any ruler or army.

It is true, scores of books are published every month in America dealing in scientific language with the condition of the people—industry, labour, poverty, destitution, and standards of living. The English reader may marvel at the precision with which "Professors" sum up the moral and human facts of life, tabulating energies and activities, virtues and vices, till it seems that the whole social system can be expressed and explained in neat scientific terms. And then we turn to such a book as this, where the same facts are dealt with—life in a great city, masses of people at work in vast factories and stockyards, the industrial machine, the application of science to human effort, all the arithmetical facts which the text-books deal with—but from a different point of view. Mr. Sinclair sees it all from the point of view of the unit, the individual atom of the human machine which is grinding out manufactured goods for the consumption of the world. He singles out a few men and women who are tossed hither and thither with the crowd, who are drawn inevitably into the heart of the system, whose energies are sucked from them, till they are thrown aside and ruthlessly trodden upon. He watches their life through its sordid miserable course, with the fierce struggle, the giving up of hope, the sinking back nto despair and degradation, and the inevitable end. Grimly, sparing no detail, he tells of the failure of American democracy, as he vehemently portrays the ugly and the horrible, a gloom through

which the light is never for a moment allowed to shine.

Mr. Sinclair's method is that of Zola. In long paragraphs, with sharp, driving sentences, he describes with relentless detail the minute circumstances which make up each picture of horror. "The Jungle" is not a novel in the ordinary sense of the term: it is intended as an accurate account of the working classes in Chicago, the fictitious characters being the pivots on which this inner history is made to turn. The book would be lightened if there were more dialogue, if there were less description and more action. But the force and character and the sense of human terror which the author puts into his narrative compel the reader's attention and hold him with cumulative effect from beginning to end.

The scene opens with the marriage feast of Jurgis Rudkus, the tall Lithuanian "with the mighty shoulders and the giant hands . . . and thick, black hair that curled in waves about his ears," and the blue-eyed and fair Ona. It was a year and a half ago, in his native land, that Jurgis had met Ona, and determined to throw in his lot with her and old Teta, her stepmother, and her six children, and old Jonas, Teta's brother, and Ona's cousin, Marija.

> That was a country where, they said, a man might earn three roubles a day; and Jurgis figured what three roubles a day would mean, with prices as they were where he lived, and decided forthwith that he would go to America and marry, and be a rich man in the bargain. In that country, rich or poor, a man was free, it

was said ; he did not have to go into the army, he did not have to pay out his money to rascally officials—he might do as he pleased, and count himself as good as any other man. So America was a place of which lovers and young people dreamed. If one could only manage to get the price of a passage, he could count his troubles at an end.

There is a grim irony in the taking of this Lithuanian family from Russia, the country whose barbarisms and miseries we have learnt to denounce, and transferring them to Chicago, the industrial centre of free America. This queer Lithuanian family, knowing not a word of English, accustomed to the fresh air of the country, did not find Chicago what they had expected. At first they were more astonished than appalled at the interminable streets and chimneys, the gloom and the filth, and the wonderful organisation of the ocean of stockyards and the thousands of hands employed. "Jurgis talked lightly about work, because he was young. They told him stories about the breaking down of men there in the stockyards of Chicago, and of what had happened to them afterwards—stories to make your flesh creep, but Jurgis would only laugh. He had only been there four months, and he was young, and a giant besides." He threw himself into his work with almost a feeling of pride at being a cog in the prodigious machinery of cattle driving and killing and carving and canning.

The work which Jurgis was to do here was very simple, and it took him but a few minutes to learn it. He was provided with a

stiff besom, such as is used by street sweepers, and it was his place to follow down the line the man who drew out the smoking entrails from the carcase of the steer ; this mass was to be swept into a trap, which was then closed, so that no one might slip into it. As Jurgis came in, the first cattle of the morning were just making their appearance ; and so, with scarcely time to look about him, and none to speak to any one, he fell to work. It was a sweltering day in July, and the place ran with steaming hot blood—one waded in it on the floor. The stench was almost overpowering, but to Jurgis it was nothing. His whole soul was dancing with joy—he was at work at last ! He was at work and earning money !

Marija and Jonas, too, succeeded in getting jobs, and in the first blush of success they were deluded into " buying " a house on the hire-purchase system, paying away all their money as a deposit. And then their evils began. If they could not pay all their rent, they would lose the house, and they had to strain every nerve to keep it. As the winter came on hands were turned off, and none of the family was in continuous work. And Jurgis began slowly to learn that the system was rotten.

Here was Durham's, for instance, owned by a man who was trying to make as much money out of it as he could, and did not care in the least how he did it ; and underneath him, ranged in ranks and grades like an army, were managers and superintendents and foremen, each one driving the man next below him, and trying to squeeze out of him as much work as possible. And all the men of the same rank were pitted against each other ; the accounts of each were kept separately, and every man lived in terror of losing his job, if another made a better record than he.

At last even little Ona and the children are com-

pelled to go to work. On every side is felt the stress of competition. They were poor people, and ignorant. "How could they know that there was no sewer to their house, and that the drainage of fifteen years was in a cesspool under it?" How could they know that they were served with doctored milk, or that their canned peas had been coloured with copper salts? Soon Jurgis began to learn that even the big concerns were not too great to cheat, though they were too great to be punished. A man who was one minute late lost an hour's pay. Nor was he paid for "broken time." "A man might work full fifty minutes, but if there was no work to fill out the hour, there was no pay for him." He was compelled to work at a pace set by machines, and if he could not keep up there were plenty of men outside clamouring to get his job. At length, when Jurgis fell ill, the company repudiated responsibility, and the home was miserably maintained by Ona and the children, and threatened always by dissolution. He goes back to find his place at the yards taken, and in despair submits to the filth and poison of the fertiliser works. One night his wife does not come home. She explains; but it happens again. He traces her absence to the tyranny of her "boss," and, from the fury of thrashing the man, he is dragged off to prison, his family is evicted, and he is put upon the "black list" of the company.

It is impossible to convey in a short space the impression of accumulating horror and disaster which

Mr. Sinclair has put into this account of the using up of the individual till he is throttled and stifled by the money-making machine set in motion by stupendous capital, employing a stupendous number of men. Even the strong and capable may be the victims of spite; but in any case when their strength is used up by the driving pace they must join the failures. If they are not willing to become tramps and thieves who prey upon society, they must disappear altogether. Every man's hand is against his neighbour, and the wastage of humanity brings profit only to the one or two who come to the top. We are shown how the "speeding-up" process which we love to think of as "efficiency" means not only the cutting down of prices, but also the exhaustion of lives.

Mr. Sinclair's ironic reference to Russia may serve to call our attention to a remarkable fact. Although Russia groans under a rapacious and cruel bureaucracy, the protest in literature is as often directed against the modern social and industrial system as against the system of government. Wherever "western civilisation" is beginning to triumph, the "civilised" are uttering their bitter complaints against it. It is instructive to notice how such a writer as Maxim Gorky conducts the campaign in a country where civilisation and barbarism have stumbled one against the other.

If you strip off the mask of convention, lay aside the restraints which belong to the code of respectability, and expose raw human nature with its barba-

rous proclivities and its flashes of inspiration, you have Maxim Gorky's "Creatures That Once Were Men." It is a name which these creatures themselves accept with cynical rejoicing; if they have ceased to be men, they have become brutes and gods, the brute presumably predominating because once they were men. Maxim Gorky has chosen for his subject the inmates of a doss-house that he may the more clearly show human nature untrammelled, as revealed in men, gross, vicious, foul-mouthed, hating authority, cut loose from the past, without hope for the future, seizing the brutal but conceivably brilliant present, and laughing to scorn every accepted dogma of society. By this means he throws into naked contrast the shams of civilisation, supported on one side by a well-dressed, cheating, pertinacious merchant; on another side by a cringing inn-keeper with the nature of a flunkey; on another side by corporations, courts, and inspectors of police—the machinery of society.

Captain Kuvalda is keeper of the doss-house—"a tall, broad-shouldered man of fifty, with a raw-looking face, swollen with drunkenness, and with a dirty yellowish beard. His eyes were large and grey, with an insolent expression of happiness." All the fallen creatures of the district flock to the dirty benches of his house, where they may pay two kopecks for the night, and talk politics, swear, and get drunk to their hearts' content. One of these is a "teacher," who has followed most pursuits at one time or another, who

now "reports for the papers" in the intervals of drunkenness, and is a congenial companion for the Captain because he will listen to his speeches. Another, Deacon Taras, has been "degraded from his office for drunkenness and immorality." And then there was Paltara Taras, who had been imprisoned three times for theft, and could tell "tales of his own composition" and could "go on relating and composing all day, from morning to night, without once repeating what he had said before." These and many others drink vodki by night, and pass the morning with drunken headaches, generally hungry, always thirsty, spending such money as comes their way at the eating-house of one Vaviloff, where they are tolerated or scorned by those above them socially and beneath them intellectually.

The *motif* of the story is the hatred felt by these "creatures that once were men" for the merchant who is landlord of the doss-house—a man rich, respectable, unscrupulous, "who passed them very often, contemptuously turning up his eyes and giving them no more attention than he bestowed on the other heaps of rubbish lying on the ground. He was well fed, and that exasperated them still more." They felt it splendid when one of them found a chance to strike a blow at the merchant's purse. It was found that the new red factory, wonderfully built by the merchant, encroached on the ground of Vaviloff, keeper of the eating-house. The Captain and the teacher persuade Vaviloff that he can extract

2000 roubles from the merchant if he will take out a summons at law. The teacher draws up a petition to the court, and they await results. Then the dapper young son of the merchant, a "red-cheeked, nice-looking youngster, in a long square-cut overcoat," goes in to Vaviloff, talks to him, commands, and settles the matter out of court for a hundred roubles.

The matter ends grimly with a drinking bout, and the carrying in of the dead body of the teacher. "Whether he is sleeping or dead," says the Captain, "I do not know . . . . I am a little drunk." And then appear the doctor, the police inspector, the coroner, and last of all the merchant. The ensuing scene involves some ribald language, the arrest of the Captain, and the break-up of the doss-house. That is all—there is no weeping over "creatures that once were men."

"The interest of the tale," says Mr. G. K. Chesterton in a preface he has written to the translation, "consists in this sharp contrast between a simplicity which we in the West feel to be very old, and a rebelliousness which we in the West feel to be very new." "If any man," he concludes, "wishes to discover whether or no he has really learnt to regard the line between man and brute as merely relative and evolutionary, let him say again to himself those frightful words, 'Creatures that once were men.'" I am inclined to think that the sarcasm is aimed, not at the creatures that once were men, but at men;

and that these words are "frightful" not because it is terrible to have crossed the boundary of men, but because it is terrible not to have crossed the boundary. Gorky does not lament the "fall from humanity"; he glories in it. He sees human society as an organism evolving swindlers, impostors, hypocrites, ranters, flunkeys, and people virtuous only because they are afraid of vice. In this little book he makes us sympathise with the "creatures that once were men;" who in their licentiousness are worse than brutes, but in their freedom are gods. Captain Kuvalda is both when he cries:

> I . . . I was once a man . . . now I am an outcast . . . that means I have no obligations. It means that I am free to spit on every one. The nature of my present life means the rejection of my past . . . giving up all relations to men who are well fed and well dressed, and who look upon me with contempt because I am inferior to them in the matter of feeding or dressing. I must develop something new within myself, do you understand? Something that will make Judas Petunikoff and his kind tremble and perspire before me!

Maxim Gorky disbelieves in modern society because he believes in the universal; he even thinks it better to be one of these disgusting creatures, who are at least free, than to be one of the custom-bound things known as men. Just as the most slavish of all creatures in the land of the Houyhnhnms were men, so it is the most ignominious of all the creatures in this book who, being asked "What are you?" replies in a hoarse voice, "A man."

Here is the protest, blunt, raw, human, echoing through the cities and provinces of every country which is civilised. It is the cry of the creature in pain, the hapless human being who knows for certain that his heart is not so evil as his lot, that his life does not reach up to the godlike ideals which for a certainty he possesses. He is afflicted with the disease of the First Man; he knows good and evil; and it seems that he has lighted on the knowledge at the very moment when the good has fallen into abeyance. "The mighty blessings of civilisation and morality!" he hears the politicians and philanthropists proclaiming with all the glibness customary to the most stupid and futile of mankind; and he looks around him cynically, he looks within him, dolefully. Sadly he repeats the century-old "Lament":

> Out of the day and night
> A joy has taken flight:
> Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar
> Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
> No more—oh, never more!

CHAPTER X

THE INGENIOUS PHILOSOPHERS

The political philosophers of the past were inclined to explain the functions of the State chiefly by reference to its history and origin; those of to-day, though making full use of the historical method, are more concerned with that towards which the community is drifting—the future of the State. Plato regarded a primitive, "simple" city as being nearer to the ideal than the complex developments of his own age. Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau agreed in holding up as ideals either the state of nature from which we had fallen or the early associations of mankind immediately following the state of nature. But the trend of modern science is in the direction of prophecy. Astronomers can now tell us when to expect the next eclipse of the sun; meteorologists predict the heat waves which are to burn up western Europe; seismologists foretell the coming earthquake disturbances in central Asia. And in like manner political scientists map out the future of human institutions with almost superhuman prescience. There are not wanting philosophers who can describe the exact course which the revolution in

Russia will take, who can tell us the ultimate issue of the conflict between Lords and Commons, and can explain how Turkey will be regenerated by contact with the West. Of course their evidence and their methods of proof are based upon a study of the past, but their conclusions refer to the future. In view of the frequent expressions of discontent with the present condition of the world, it is instructive to study writers who, though they may not exactly claim to understand the purport and end of cosmic activity, do not hesitate to ask: What is the meaning of Empire? What fundamental ideas and ideals are essential to social advance? Whither are our activities leading us?

Two books in which the authors grapple with such problems as these are Dr. Emil Reich's "Imperialism: Its Prices; Its Vocation," and Mr. H. G. Wells's "A Modern Utopia." They are not of equal importance, nor equally general in their bearing. Whilst Mr. Wells attempts to probe beneath the surface of society, and find its basis in individual thought and character, Dr. Emil Reich is brilliant, suggestive, but elusive, as he rapidly sums up a few types of mankind and singles out with intellectual agility a few of the forces which go to the making of nations and empires.

The latter is clever almost to the point of aggressiveness. Everywhere he sees resemblances and analogies. He builds vast theories out of infinitesimal likenesses. With a stroke of the pen he transports

us from century to century. He suggests astounding parallels almost without a word of explanation. The links in his argument are paradoxes : the whole elaborate pack of cards which he has reared seems perpetually toppling to the ground, only it is perpetually saved by his quick instinct, and the gradual emergence of the fact that he has a meaning more profound than the somewhat flimsy argument which he has flourished before us.

To ascertain "What the foreign policy of Great Britain shall be—or, more simply, what British Imperialism is to mean," is the object of his little book, and his answer is to be based upon "a mature consideration of Imperialism in the past and in empires other than the British." He begins by blandly assuring us that "in British home matters one can afford to wait. There is no particular danger in delay, nor any special advantage in superior wisdom." "But if," he continues, "British Imperialism is a matter, or largely a matter, of foreign policy, then the possibility of blundering becomes an exceedingly grave question. . . . There is scarcely any exaggeration in saying that nations with a clear-sighted and steady general plan in their foreign policy have the greatest chance of ultimate success." Giving us at the outset no further clue as to the sense in which he intends to use the word "Imperialism," he plunges into an assertion that Empires are things necessary and inevitable, that they are not the products of national character, "of mere plans,

schemes, adventures, exploits, or any other apparently free action of man," but of geographical position and wide historical movements. "The Russians have necessarily formed an Empire," he remarks, speaking as if the Russian nation had met in solemn conclave and declared, "Now we must form an Empire or be eliminated." The Norman Kings of England "thought imperially," he tells us, seemingly unconscious of the fact that England and the French dependencies of the English kings never together formed one Empire, and were united only through the person of their common sovereign. He declares that "imperial expansion" was the determining influence in nearly all the great European events of the sixteenth century; that seventeenth-century Puritanism in England aimed at "equilibrium at home, *in order to* devote the country's forces all the more freely to empire-building abroad." The italics are mine; the words imply a conscious purpose among Puritan politicians for the existence of which Dr. Reich does not adduce a shadow of evidence. From such an inconsequent array of statements he concludes, "The English have these eight hundred years been prompted and pushed, impregnated and energised, by a force practically unknown on the Continent: by Imperialism."

Yet we discover later that Dr. Reich does attach some more definite meaning to the word "Imperialism." It is "the necessity of ruling over vast numbers of people"; it is "an entire Scheme of

National Life"; it is "not merely a question of territorial conquest, of fiscal reform, of Colonial relations, but also, and pre-eminently, a question of National Life, of the whole scheme and organism of the men and women of a country." He examines its typical features in the great empires of the world —Rome, the United States, Russia, China and the Roman Catholic Church. In all of these he finds a common feature—uniformity of type within the Empire. Contrasting the Greek city and the Roman State, he points out that the former, being less absorbed in Empire-building, was able to permit to each of its citizens "the intense differentiation of his own individuality"; while the latter, suppressing spontaneity and diversity, imposed uniform language, customs, manners, opinions and tastes. He finds that the "imperial" idea in all these cases tended to kill the individual by the suppression of the desires, the blunting of the emotions, the stifling of that "spontaneity and elasticity of the mind and of the heart which is the real spring of all social charm and intellectual creativeness." In the chapter on "Imperialism and Woman" he points to the "lessened femininity" of the "Imperial woman." The American women say, "If we are no Nausikaas, we are Iphigenias." For Imperialism means sacrifice, the sacrifice of romance and humanism, a "brow-beating of nature"—an idea which he further applies in tracing the relation between "Imperialism and Religion" and "Imperialism and Intellect."

For Dr. Reich the salvation of British Imperialism is to be found in the fact that England is a small country separated from her Colonies; each part can retain its individuality; it is not levelled down by the Imperialism which "desiccates many of the forces of our human intellect and heart," "unnatures woman," "drives people into a dead uniformity," and in the end "drains people of their vitality." These disasters would only befall us if we closed ourselves from the rest of the world "by a series of preferential tariffs in favour of the Colonies," or by forgetting our position as one of the European Powers.

The book is a piece of brilliant intellectual gymnastic, full of nimble and suggestive arguments, often inconsequent, but always returning with shrewd insight to the defence of a plausible position. But the author has relied too much upon catchwords and popular expressions. He begins by telling us that external forces determine history, and ends by hinting that after all the internal things are those which really matter. We shall find that Mr. Wells has developed the very point on which Dr. Reich was most unsatisfying. "A Modern Utopia" should be read as a corrective to "Imperialism."

One of the charms of reading Mr. H. G. Wells is that in each new book there is a perceptible advance beyond his previous work, a development of argument which shows that he is far from being a man "of one idea." In his earlier books he made

us look upon the gloomiest sides of life, the divisions of society, the wasting of energies, the disease of the social organism. But in "A Modern Utopia" he seeks to bring out the greater possibilities inherent in human nature, and therefore in society; to show us his conception of a healthy social organism as it might be under the happiest possible conditions. He has, moreover, been fortunate in inventing an original artistic form. As Plato relieved the oppression of argument by the lighter turns of dialogue, Mr. Wells has relieved it by the device of a sort of lantern lecture and a "Voice." The Owner of the Voice, whom "you must figure to yourself as a whitish, plump man," often turns to his imaginary audience to illustrate his points in a personal way, or to retail his conversations with a second person, who "is spoken of as the botanist . . . a leaner, rather taller, graver and much less garrulous man." The latter accompanies the writer, or lecturer, on his expedition to Utopia; his dull, narrow, sentimental conversation represents middle-class conventionalism; he is a man wrapped up in the particular, familiar things, who has no curiosity outside his little zone of interest, and even amid the wonders of Utopia is mainly concerned in recalling the Frognal girl who jilted him, and the monster of a husband who neglected her. The botanist is a mean product of this world; a foil to the finer products of Utopia.

The writer is modest in his views. He knows that

other men have failed in constructing ideal States, and he pictures the spirit of creation smiling at his efforts, and ironically asking for "a few hints." "Yet, after all, why should two men be smiled into apathy by the Infinite?" He observes that he "has ever been warmed to desire himself a citizen in the Republic of Plato;" and doubts "if any one could stand a month of the relentless publicity of virtue planned by More." No, his Utopia must preserve the "fertilising conflict of individualities"; "a Universe ceases when you shiver the mirror of the least of individual minds."

All previous ideal states, Mr. Wells notices, have been perfect and static: his is to be a progressive, changing, or evolving state; an impracticable world, perhaps, but not an impossible one; where human nature is the same in its basic constituents, but better because the conditions have been made ideal, the limitations removed. "No less than a planet will serve the purpose of a modern Utopia," and he passes his imaginary planet before us in a series of pictures. He does not fear the uniformity of Dr. Reich's Empire; his planet is all one State, speaking one language, but preserving and even cultivating individual freedoms and idiosyncrasies. His object is to give the maximum freedom to the individual, the State chipping away "just those spendthrift liberties that waste liberty, and not one liberty more." This he believes to be possible under better economic conditions. The invention of labour-saving machinery

means that sufficient commodities are produced to keep the whole world in opulence if unfair distribution and wastage are avoided. In Utopia, though the owning of personal property is encouraged up to a certain point, the State, represented by the local authority, owns all natural sources of force and all strictly natural products. It ensures a comfortable minimum wage to every worker who cannot by his own enterprise secure a higher wage; it provides plenty of leisure; and transports its citizens by swift, cheap means of locomotion from the scene of their work to healthy and beautiful homes. It recognises that activity is a blessing, but that toil is a curse. Every man, enjoying the best of educations, having every opportunity, has throughout his life enough leisure in which to cultivate his individual tastes. The State provides also for the economic freedom of woman; it secures an income to those who are mothers of healthy children. Motherhood is to be a "remunerative calling for a woman," and there is to be none of that "fear that often turns her from a beautiful to a mercenary marriage." The spirit of Mr. Wells's proposals may be suggested by the following sentence:—

> The aim of all these devices, the minimum wage, the standard of life, provision for all the feeble, unemployed and so forth, is not to rob life of incentives but to change their nature, to make life not less energetic, but less panic-stricken and violent and base, to shift the incidence of the struggle for existence from our lower to our higher emotions, so to anticipate and neutralise the motives of the cowardly and bestial, that the ambitious and energetic

imagination which is man's finest quality may become the incentive and determining factor in survival.

I have indicated only one or two of the ideal conditions suggested by this author. As set forth by him they provide for the latent possibilities of the social organism, and for an attractive as well as a sane life. But just as Socrates in the "Republic," after showing that his state was desirable, failed when he tried to show how it was also possible, so Mr. Wells fails when he describes the rulers, or "Samurai," upon whose fitness his well-governed planet depends. In fixing rules and a code of conduct for his Samurai, the "voluntary nobility" who combine in themselves "poietic" and "kinetic" qualities, in imposing upon them a stringent regimen, he seems to be contradicting his hypothesis of desirable freedom and diversity in character. It is true the discipline they undergo is a voluntary discipline; but the life they are described as living is as noble and dull as that of the Philosopher-Kings, and has all the cold unattractiveness which Mr. Wells himself laments in More's Utopia. He seems to identify the "political" and "theoretic" life, which perhaps are as truly distinct in the twentieth century as in the time of Aristotle. But whether his State is practicable or not, its main interest lies in the fact that he tries to determine the desirable in terms of the present, to enunciate a conscious ideal towards which (or something like it) the community should seek to advance, to show clearly in what respects the "lower self" of society is

finding expression at the expense of the "higher self."

This eager, active, strenuous, never-resting age has a remarkable exponent in Mr. Wells. He has that type of mind which, directly he feels the modern dissatisfaction, refuses to spend his force in vain regrets, or in protest, or in flight, but at once sets to work to think of a remedy. How far removed is he from the Oriental who, when confronted with evil, resigns himself to the will of God or the philosophy of fatalism; or from the mediæval Catholic, who regards the flesh as only fit to be mortified, and takes refuge beneath the embracing charity of the Church! Such men as Mr. Wells gird on their armour and prepare to fight the enemy on his own ground. They believe that human beings hold their destiny in their own hands, and that with the help of their own brains and their own scientific ingenuities they may compass what human end they please. Always conscious of imperfection they can never rest, but must be for ever planning and devising and reshaping the difficult material on which they work.

It should be noticed, in speaking of this practical philosophy which takes the form of anticipation and suggestion, that its champions are always picturing a world different in its organisation from that in which we live, but the same in quality or temperament. They do not imagine that our descendants might acquire new traits of character, imparted to us, shall we say,

by some such race as the Japanese; or that the national mind might revert to a mediæval form with a feudal-Catholic point of view; nor do they picture it as developing some entirely new phase of feeling, thought, imagination, outlook upon life in general. And yet if we go far forward through the ages we know for a certainty that the changes in our outward life and in the organisation of society will not be nearly so great as the inner changes of character and sentiment. When Socrates preached that virtue is knowledge, what would he have said had he known that a time was to come when knowledge would be the disease of a whole epoch? In his time he could not have conceived such a thing; and yet to-day it is true. Even Mr. Wells—the clever, thoughtful, ever-delightful Mr. Wells—is eaten up by and absorbed into the spirit of his own time. Living in an organising age, he still thinks that a different organisation is alone necessary to bring the millennium. A more plausible Utopia is suggested by the small child who is taught to pray, "Please, God, give me a new heart."

That there will come some sort of change in heart—in the social temperament—is as certain as the law of evolution. But we cannot describe or imagine it, for we could not do so till we had lived through those as yet unknown experiences which will go to the moulding of character; and even if some one who had visited that future world in a dream should come back and seek to describe it, there is no one who could

understand him, for understanding is the fruit of experience.

And yet, as we battle with the problems of the world, and seek to reshape it according to an ideal, we are always making, not that ideal, which is only a projection forwards of the present, but another, new, strange actuality which we could not have guessed at, which could not have come to us in our wildest dreams. The Wellses and the Sydney Webbs and the busy army of politicians and reformers, practical people that they are, are always unwittingly helping to accomplish the inexplicable and the mystical, to initiate new phases of character, feeling and sensibility—to contribute to great changes which have no visible relation to what they planned.

CHAPTER XI

THE FUGITIVES

At the island of Leucas, in the Ionian Isles, was born Lafcadio Hearn, the son of an Irish officer and a Greek woman—a man whose life from beginning to end was destined to reveal a struggle of the artistic temperament against hostile conditions. Most of his boyhood was spent in Wales at the home of an aunt, a Roman Catholic, a narrow and unsympathetic woman, whose influence, combined with that of a hated cousin, Jane, drove him to detest the orthodox forms of Christianity. "I could not help," he says, "suspecting all the friends of cousin Jane's God, and feeling a natural sympathy with his enemies—whether devils, goblins, fairies, witches, or heathen deities." A little later when he was introduced to the older gods of Greek mythology, and saw the pictures of heroes, fairies and nereids, he was dazzled by the "unspeakably lovely" forms, and yielded to a conviction "that the gods had been belied, *because* they were beautiful." Left friendless and without means at the age of sixteen he dragged out three years of misery and poverty in London, till he found his way as an emigrant to New York, and then to Cincinnati.

At the latter place he at length secured ill-paid work as a journalist, but found friends and literary acquaintances with whom he long corresponded. His removal to New Orleans brought him happier though still irksome conditions, and it was there that he gained his first fame as a *littérateur* and imaginative writer. At the age of forty he went to Japan, and spent the last fourteen years of his life as a teacher and lecturer in the Japanese service.

The letters published in Mrs. Wetmore's (Elizabeth Bisland's) collection begin from the time when he went to New Orleans and found himself in an older, richer, more mellow world, away from the hateful stress of Cincinnati life. His style is already in a large measure formed, though it is more full of profuse imagery and fantastic epithet than in his later years. He seems to have written as he felt, with the power of abandoning himself to the mood, though not without a view to precision of thought and beauty of form; so that at this time he was expressing himself in his letters with even more effect than in the strange and often bizarre works published at the same period. For many reasons one is tempted to compare his career with that of Edgar Allan Poe. Both were condemned to spend the greater part of their lives at uncongenial work, under the stress of poverty and weak health; both were possessed of vivid imaginations prone to the fanciful, the eccentric and the superstitious, and a passionate love of the beautiful in all its forms. But whereas Poe succumbed to the bitterness

of the struggle, Lafcadio Hearn disciplined the devastating tendencies of his own temperament, and triumphed. "Do you never reflect," he writes to his old friend Krehbiel, "that within a few years you will no longer be the *young man*, and that, like Vesta's fires, the enthusiasm of youth for an art-idea must be well-fed with the sacred branches to keep it from dying out?" "Art," he says, "is exacting. To acquire real eminence in any one branch of any art, one must study nothing else for a lifetime." It was his most bitter regret that he had not the time, or the early training, or the health, to discipline his mind by severe and consecutive study.

Yet he had his own strict plan and ideal of life, the main object of which was to keep alive the imaginative and percipient element within him—for he seemed always to have a pathetic dread of losing his power of feeling and thrilling, and of responding to the delicate manifestations of beauty. So this is his plan:

> I never read a book which does not powerfully impress the imagination; but whatever contains novel, curious, potent imagery I always read, no matter what the subject. When the soil of fancy is really well-enriched with innumerable fallen leaves, the flowers of language grow spontaneously. There are four things especially which enrich fancy—mythology, history, romance, poetry—the last being really the crystallisation of all human desire after the impossible, the diamonds created by prodigious pressure of suffering. Now there is very little really good poetry, so it is easy to choose. In history I think one should only seek the extraordinary, the monstrous, the terrible; in mythology the most

fantastic and sensuous, just as in romance. But there is one more absolutely essential study in the formation of a strong style —science. No romance equals it. If one can store up in his brain the most extraordinary facts of astronomy, geology, ethnology, &c., they furnish him with a wonderful and startling variety of images, symbols, and illustrations.

It was when he reached Japan that his character seemed to deepen and harden. Though he had already reached middle age, he seems not in the least to have lost the precious power of receiving new impressions and absorbing new material into his character. He no longer for want of special knowledge strove merely "to woo the Muse of the odd," by which formerly he had hoped to "attract some little attention." Indeed, he had no desire at all in the ordinary sense to attract attention. In spite of, though, perhaps, to some extent because of, his acceptance of Herbert Spencer's philosophy, he took into his character much of the spirit of Buddhism, which he had always admired, and now studied at first hand. He expressed a doubt "that the development of individuality is a lofty or desirable tendency," and came to believe that the miseries of Western life are mainly due to the dominance of the idea of personality, and with it that of selfishness. It may have been from this idea of self-repression that he was willing to sink his own personality in marrying a Japanese wife, adopting Japanese customs and dress, and becoming a Japanese citizen.

Even at the end of his fourteen years' residence

he professed to "have learned about Japan only enough to convince me that I know nothing about Japan." Life there had been for him "something so placid and kindly and gentle that it is just like one of those dreams in which everybody is good-natured about everything." Though the women were joyous and simple-hearted, he complained of a "far-offness" about the men—"one never gets very close to them." He regrets the loss of his "pen of fire"—"there isn't any fire here. It is all soft, dreamy, quiet, pale, faint, gentle, hazy, vapoury, visionary." And yet it was he, probably first among Englishmen, who realised the sterner foundations of the Japanese character.

Thus for many years he was held a stranger sojourning in the land, like Odysseus in the island of Ogygia. He attended to his growing family, and held a chair of English literature, "setting all canons at defiance, and attempting to teach only the emotional side of literature, in its relation to modern thought." In 1904, in the midst of his work, and almost without warning, he died; but not before he had completed his task as an interpreter of Japan to his own countrymen.

I have only touched on one or two outstanding facts in the life of that singular artist as they may be culled from Mrs. Wetmore's "Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn." His interest to us here lies in the fact that he was rejected by the world into which he was born, and that he failed to find there the

inspiration or the material for his genius. London, New York, and Cincinnati failed to provide him with that æsthetic satisfaction without which an artist cannot survive. The things that are most typical in Western life wearied and repelled him, and the vague longing that filled his earlier career drove him to queer, fantastic studies and an idealisation of the romantic tropics. As we read his biography we feel that his first object was to escape, to fly from, the hampering, unromantic, prison-like conditions of modern existence; at any cost to break away from the fixed conventions of a utilitarian society. He could not stand it; it limited him; it dwarfed him; it gave no room in which to expand the more delicate feelings, the finer imagination, the artistic perception of the manifold miracles of God and man. And so he fled, not indeed to the tropics, but to Japan—to the unexplored Eastern mind which may yet afford a refuge from modernism.

In the last chapter it was suggested that the practical and the ingenious philosophers have concerned themselves rather with systems and institutions than with questions of national temperament. Not so the persons I have called fugitives. For them temperament is everything, with all that it involves of atmosphere, environment and faith. They to the full have felt the moral poverty of the cultured West; they have been disgusted by the narrow intolerance on the one side, and on the other by the no less narrow quality called "breadth of view";

they hate the maxims, doctrines, cults, idolatries, and ostentation which are treated so seriously and which take the place of simple emotions and simple beliefs. They see art treated like merchandise, "things of beauty" stocked and classified, the objects of reverence catalogued and explained till they nauseate such sense of reverence as really remains. For these persons there is no resource but in flight, actual flight to foreign lands and peoples, or flight in imagination to other times and rarer atmospheres.

There must be many thousands of these fugitives living not with us, but among us, who seize every opportunity of escape. Not many of them are writers, but there are a few, like the strenuous Cunninghame Graham, or Miss Gertrude Bell, author of that fascinating book of travel, "The Desert and the Sown"; or Miss Edith Durham, who wrote "Through the Lands of the Serb."

"Civilisation brings knowledge and many, many wonders, but it does not bring happiness." Such were the words of a devoted priest of the Montenegrin mountains to the adventurous lady who went about among the natives of Servia, Montenegro, Albania and Old Servia. The words afford a clue to the understanding of Miss Durham's interpretation of the people with whom she travelled, talked, supped, and endured privation. She wandered, unaccompanied by civilised friends or officials, with no other purpose than that of seeing and associating with the friendly folk who dwell in the old-world

countries on the borders of Turkey. "My God, how English!" cries the German in the railway train. "Look you, Fräulein, your nation does things that are quite fearfully silly, and it succeeds because the things are so unexpected that no one is prepared for them." Having already searched the out-of-the-way corners of France, Germany, and Italy, Miss Durham turned up one day in Montenegro, and set to work to explore the country. She knew nothing of the language. No matter. "Every one knows that you want food, drink, and sleep." So she set off alone, trusting to Providence and a rough people who proved to be extremely hospitable; went in and out amongst the mountains and villages, fording streams, sleeping in hovels, facing armed Albanians, and coaxing or cajoling every one by pleasant manners and "English" audacity. Having made herself famous in Montenegro, she turned next to Servia, and astonished the inhabitants there in like manner; and thence again to Montenegro and the Turkish territory known as Old Servia.

For the reader of this book Montenegro is no longer a mere name on the map. It is inhabited by brightly-clad, simple, credulous people, poor, but not unhappy, ignorant of foreign countries and foreign culture, but proud in the possession of independence, and strongly conscious of racial community. The memory of great Servian traditions is still cherished among them; and fresh in the minds of every member of this mountain principality are the terrilbe

conflicts with the Turk, and the driving of the hated race into the lowlands of Old Servia. Every mountain and hill which Miss Durham passes is pointed out as a famous battleground ; the shrines commemorate the exploits of heroes who have become saints ; and crosses by the roadside recall some hideous outrage of the Mussulman or terrible revenge executed by the Christian. Now they live with the privilege of carrying arms, and in peace ; poverty-stricken, but hospitable ; marvelling if a strange foreigner like Miss Durham breaks into their monotonous lives with the incredible object of "seeing their country." When some one remarks that travelling takes time as well as money, "Time!" ejaculates the Montenegrin. "What is time? Time is nothing. You live, and then you die." The account of the mountain church of "Our Lady among the Rocks" is like some story of the early saints. "The church of God, built by His hands in the wilderness ; to care for it is all my life," says the "solitary sentinel" of the holy sepulchre in the mountain cave. He too has fought against the Turks, and foresees fresh conflicts.

"It is too horrible to speak of—these scenes ; it is all horrible in war. I have seen it. Pray God that we shall have peace. But a day of trial is coming to my poor Montenegrins. Ah, mademoiselle, you understand them. They are so uncivilised and so rough, but they are so good, so simple. You, who travel among them, know how good they are. You will tell them in England —will you not?—of my poor people. . . . These poor good people, they have no idea what life is out in the great world, and

it is coming to them. And I know what it means, this civilisation. I have lived in Paris—in Paris, savez-vous," he said vehemently. "All I can do is to help them to keep their faith. Till now they have lived with God and the mountains. . . . It is very little that one needs in this life. We have so short a time here."

Miss Durham caught the temperament of the people among whom she travelled, and that is why she makes us feel that we are living in another Europe and another century, among the people of the Balkans as they are to this day. Among these half-civilised, half-barbarous folk, in whose remote dwelling and wayside hostels she finds friends and lodgings and perpetual cause for merriment, we escape for a time from the beaten tracks of the tourist and the distant clamour of cities. We are far from London, Paris, and Berlin, and their constant rattle of politics and problems. Here are the *people* about whom all the world has been talking, the very men who have hated and fought the Turk, who have set up their governments and thrown them down with so little respect for Western ideas. Miss Durham does not judge them; she shows them to us—these people so conscious of a common Servian nationality, with a hatred of the all-absorbing Austrian, and something more than hatred for the villainous existence which their cousins in Macedonia still drag out beneath the rule of the Turk. She comes to the Montenegrin frontier; she tells quite simply with what savage joy these frontiermen, living always with arms in their hands, received her, honoured her,

and planned for her an expedition into the heart of the dejected, wasted, starving country of the Serbs across the border.

Miss Durham is one of those who have actually travelled to visit the regions of romance, who have literally realised the expression "flight of imagination." Shall we turn now to consider a distinguished Frenchman whose natural trend of feeling takes him away from the main currents of civilisation, and as naturally subjects him to the lure of the East? Now it is India, now Japan, now Turkey, that captures and holds Pierre Loti and offers the material of romance. One of his latest books, "Désenchantées," is peculiarly interesting because Constantinople, the scene of it, full of the spirit of the East, is being invaded by the questioning spirit of the West—a melancholy, wasting invasion.

Whether this work is fact or fiction matters little. Enough that it ushers us into an atmosphere, that it gives us the very colours and sounds of a place, that it suggests scenes which live for ever in memory, and figures which, moving mysteriously amid half-splendid, half-barbaric surroundings, are invested with all the imagined romance of the East. It is true to the reality, not of concrete things, but of that luminous world of the imagination which for the artist is more real than material objects. Pierre Loti introduces us to the two cities of Constantinople, and as he describes sea, houses, mosques, bazaars, the animation, colour, sounds and silences, he con-

tinually increases the sense of a mysterious, ever-elusive city, which harbours and conceals the inner meaning of Mohammedan life. And from this mystery of place he sets himself to draw out the greater, more romantic mystery of persons, a mystery symbolised in the dark, veiled, shapeless figures of the women as they move abroad, speaking to no men but father or husband, living as prisoners without hope of release.

The novelist represents the inmates of all the richer harems in Stamboul as living in a ferment of agitation and revolt. After a few years of freedom in early childhood they are shut out from life, subjected to severe restraint, veiled always in the presence of men. From governesses they learn music, art, and literature, and from lack of any other pursuit read omnivorously the philosophy and criticism of the West. Their aspirations thus aroused have no outlet; they see only their women friends, cleave to the conventions they detest, submit to marriage, and live out their lives in silent revolt. Three of these ladies, pushing aside the trammels, contrive a meeting with André Lhéry, the Frenchman whose books they have so much admired, and tell him of their woes.

Time after time the three veiled ladies meet the novelist, a man of middle age who has already had his experience of life, who has plumbed the depths of other loves, but now finds his sensibility touched again, his chivalry aroused, the longing for romance

awakened. Time after time, winding his way through the crowded bazaars, past the mosques where the crowds of devout worshippers prostrate themselves to the tune of the mournful chant, he seeks the trysting-place and the reserved ladies who tell him their sad tale. They urge him to write a book, to "tell all the world that we now have a soul;" and he decides to call it "Désenchantées," because Turkish women "are all waking up at once, waking up to the woe of living, to the suffering of knowledge."

"A book to prove a case?" Pierre Loti would not have us take his writings as if they had a didactic purpose. So he has created this strange, rhythmic fantasy, set in a scene of harmonious architecture, glassy water, changing skies, and myriad colours, an imaginative picture of "souls," and intercourse becoming love which is for ever "unavowed and perfectly pure," ending as such dreams must do in the satisfaction of death. "She?"—says the heroine talking of the book—"why, what would you have her do? She dies."

In this manner, aided by the alternate glow and subtlety of his style, by the aromatic perfume in which he has steeped his pen, the novelist is able to show us, not a moral, but a temperament, and such a one as the West could not produce.

One more example may be taken, a strange, uncanny example, of a writer who has failed to find inspiration in our modern society. I have already considered Mr. Jack London as a rebel, as author of

"The War of the Classes"; I now wish to consider him as a fugitive, the author of "White Fang," a book which finds its romance in the untrammelled, incalculable life of wild beasts. He is not content to travel merely to a distant country; he takes us to the land of animals. And it may be said beforehand that the least successful parts of the book are those into which men are introduced.

Mr. Kipling has taught us that it is possible so to portray the life of animals as to appeal to the emotions of men. In "The Call of the Wild" Mr. Jack London made a similar appeal to human sympathy, but with this sympathy was mingled more of primeval fear, as he showed how a dog was lured by the savagery of the "wild" back to the life of the wolf. In "White Fang" he resumes the subject of the wolf-dog, contrasting the opposing impulses of the savage and the domestic within the same animal, the latter predominating under the influences of civilisation.

At first sight this seems an unlikely theme for anything more pretentious than a fairy-tale. But Mr. London does not mean it for a fairy-tale. It seems that his aim is to appeal direct to those hereditary savage emotions which still lurk in the most sophisticated human being, transmitted from prehuman ancestors through thousands of generations. If the animal is represented as thinking a little more coherently than perhaps animals do think, that is but a small concession to the purposes of the story. He depicts for us the natural laws of life, those of

self-preservation and fierce competition as they are in their most elementary and extreme form—the stronger, not from cruelty, but from instinct, beating the life out of the weaker and devouring him as his daily food ; the ferocity of the sex-passion, the males only combining and fighting together under the pressure of hunger, and slaying one another when the pressure is relaxed, each carrying away his mate when he has killed off all rivals. The only restraint known is that of the self-preserving instinct, which binds the he-wolf to the female, and urges him to bring to her the prey which he has hunted and killed. Everywhere there is absolute freedom, and everywhere there is the fear of imminent, lurking death.

On the other hand, we are shown the completely opposite side of life—for Mr. London's story does not suggest so much the natural connection between the savage and the civilised or moral, as the direct contrast between them. Instead of licence there is law, instead of instinct there is authority. Obedience, rule, and in the highest case love, are the laws of life which combat the savage impulse—ideals which human nature was meant to realise, but which have not been strong enough to resist the lure of the wild.

From the very first page Mr. London strikes the strange note which suggests the tension of life and the pressing fear of the unknown. Two men with a sled are seen toiling silently through the frozen spruce forest, where lifelessness and immensity breathe

the spirit of desolation and mirthless laughter. The sled is drawn by six dogs, and on the sled is a narrow oblong box containing the body of a dead companion. Now and again the men stop to listen to the shrill cry of the wolves who follow their trail by day and lurk in the shadow beyond the camp-fire by night. One evening, when Bill and Henry are settling down before the fire, Bill asks :

"How many dogs 've we got, Henry ?"

"Six."

"Well, Henry——" Bill stopped for a moment, in order that his words might gain greater significance. "As I was saying, Henry, we've got six dogs. I took six fish out of the bag. I gave one fish to each dog, an', Henry, I was one fish short."

"You counted wrong."

"We've got six dogs," the other reiterated dispassionately. "I took out six fish. One Ear didn't get no fish. I come back to the bag afterward an' got 'im his fish."

"We've only got six dogs," Henry said.

"Henry," Bill went on, "I won't say they was all dogs, but there was seven of 'em that got fish."

Henry stopped eating to glance across the fire and count the dogs.

"There's only six now," he said.

"I saw the other one run off across the snow," Bill announced with cool positiveness. "I saw seven."

The seventh was the she-wolf, offspring of a wolf and a dog, who did not fear the camp-fire like the rest of the pack, who led them to the destruction of one man and the six dogs, and conducted the flight when a rescue party was at hand. From that moment the author leaves the men, and takes us with the

hungry pack led by the she-wolf and three males, who, when the pairing season comes, go together with her, fighting one another till only one survives.

> And all the while the she-wolf sat on her haunches and smiled. She was glad in vague ways by the battle, for this was the love-making of the wild, the sex-tragedy of the natural world that was tragedy only to those that died. To those that survived it was not tragedy, but realisation and achievement.

Mr. London describes with force rather than with elegance the hunting of the pair till one day the female finds her way to a den in the earth; the male is bound to go out alone to strike down birds and beast, to fight with a lynx, and live the varied life of the wild in providing food for himself, his mate, and the litter of cubs, till he himself falls upon his fate. We are shown how the one surviving cub gains his first impressions of primeval life, escaping his first enemies, killing his first prey, and learning the law which he obeys without understanding. "The aim of life was meat. Life itself was meat. Life lived on life. There were the eaters and the eaten. The law was: EAT OR BE EATEN. He did not formulate the law in clear, set terms and moralise about it. He did not even think the law; he merely lived the law without thinking about it at all."

One day the big wolf-dog, with her cub that is three parts wolf, hungry in body and in heart, walks into the camp of the Indians and yields herself into the hands of men. White Fang, as the cub is called, becomes subject also, gradually learning the mastery

of man, the orders and the rules, the things possible and the things not possible, the penalties of disobedience, and the fear of the punishing hands, feet, and missiles directed by the god-like will of human beings. Though the call of the wild still lures him again and again to desert the camp, he returns and again returns, submitting to his master not because he is kind, but because he is powerful. The savage still predominates in him. He is the enemy of all the dogs of the camp; he is the brute slave of his master; he is led to steal and sneak and bite for his living, and finally to have his savagery still further aroused by a man who uses him as a prize-fighter. Still, he acknowledges the supremacy of *force majeure*, till one day he is rescued by a humane master, who curbs and melts him by kindness and the touch of the human hand.

The author makes no attempt to interpret himself, and would probably be the last to read a precise meaning into his tale. But every incident in his story suggests the dual elements in the human race —on the one side, man as he is meant to be, a god, who rules by love, who obeys from reason; on the other side, man as we see him to-day, the fallen creature, fighting, struggling, surviving, giving vent to all the brutish and cruel impulses which survive in his complex nature, which tend in the nightmare of modern society to revive in their pristine vigour and stamp out his god-like nature.

CHAPTER XII

THE MASTER MYSTIC

Though we are mainly concerned in these pages with contemporary literature, it would be hardly possible to avoid some discussion of one or two dead writers who have left a peculiar impression upon our own age. One of these is Robert Louis Stevenson, of whom something must be said in a later chapter. Another is William Blake, the fiery prophet who has stirred into flame the most modern of the modern schools. Of that warm-blooded race of songsters and prose-poets who continually exult in the name of mystics, he is the fountain-head and inspiration, the master whom they have been proud to interpret and popularise and absorb.

As applied to Swedenborg, Blake, and their descendants, the term "mystic" has been used in a sufficiently definite sense. But it is often used so indiscriminately and vaguely that it is worth while to give some little attention to the word itself. In its original meaning it signified a person initiated in certain divine secrets, so that it is easy to see how to the popular mind "mystery" should come to mean merely something difficult to understand,

passing ordinary comprehension. Dr. William Ralph Inge has written an instructive little book called "Studies of English Mystics." At first he seems to use the term "mystics" in the sense which it came to bear in ecclesiastical history—a mystic being one who believed in the possibility of attaining intercourse with the Divine Spirit by a process of feeling or faith not to be explained by natural laws. At another time he takes the definition of a recent writer: "Mysticism is that attitude of mind which divines and moves toward the spiritual in the common things of life, not a partial and occasional operation of the mind under the guidance of far-fetched analogies." "Mysticism," Dr. Inge goes on to explain, "has no love for symbols—'loose types of things through all degrees.'"

> It rests in no half-lights; it longs to tear the heart out of every experience. It longs to dive into the hidden reality behind phenomena, and, in so far as it succeeds, it treats the phenomena as symbols. But the temper which makes playthings of symbols—which finds an æsthetic or fanciful pleasure in them—is above all things alien to it.

It tends "in the direction of pure feeling." It "repudiates intellectualism," but not intellect, "moralism, not morality."

The reader will feel that Dr. Inge is on safe ground so long as he is discussing that specimen of early English known as the "Ancren Riwle," written for the exhortation of three anchoresses, or as long as he is dealing with Julian of Norwich or

Walter Hylton. Most strange and affecting is the story of the Lady Julian, who "prayed for three gifts from God."

> The first was that she might bear the Passion of Christ in mind. The second was that she might have a bodily sickness at thirty years of age; "the third was to have, of God's gift, three wounds." As to the first, she "thought she had some feeling," but she desired, if possible, a "bodily sight" of Christ upon the Cross, to quicken her sympathies, that she might be "one of His lovers and suffer with Him."

No less valuable is the account of Walter Hylton, Canon of Thurgarton, who died in 1396. He believed in the progress of the spirit as by a sort of Jacob's ladder, beginning with the "contemplation of the facts of religion," passing to a stage of "mere feeling, without light in the understanding," becoming at the last "a combination of knowledge with perfect love." Hylton's teaching in its essence depends upon abnegation of the things of this life in order to attain to the possession of divine truth. Dr. Inge generalises:

> The strength of the best mystical teaching lies just in the recognition that we must "die to live" in every part of our spiritual nature. Our earthly affections, our appreciation of natural beauty, our intellectual speculations, must all be baptized into Christ's death. They must pass through a transformation, they must be lost and found again. There must be an apparent loss, as part of the real gain.

So far all has been clear and consistent in this delicate and appreciative study of peculiar modes of

life. The writer has been dealing with striking examples of mediæval devotion, and has adhered to a definite and convenient use of the term "mystic." But when he comes to later persons of a completely different cast of mind his application of the term becomes confusing. I must pass over the essay on William Law, merely remarking that while he does suggest "mystical elements" in Law's faith, he does not in the least show why that divine should be labelled a mystic. His treatment of Wordsworth and Browning, though extremely interesting as general criticism, is confusing when thought of as a discussion of mysticism. We are told that it is "the essence of mysticism to believe that everything in being what it is, is symbolic of something higher and deeper than itself." "Mysticism is the habit of mind which discerns the spiritual in common things." Now directly we take this definition away from particular known schools of thought and apply it indiscriminately to artists and thinkers, it is obvious that the term tends to lose its special meaning. Every person who has imagination, and sees in things anything more than the mere thing, every person who has more than brute sensations, is to that extent a mystic in Dr. Inge's sense of the term. Every one capable of the least uplifting of the spirit, of enthusiasm, of imagination, of delight in beauty and truth, is so far a "mystic," is so far one who sees the "divine behind phenomena." Then why single out Wordsworth

and Browning? True, they had the faculty of idealising, of seeing in objects that which transcends objects—in the words which Dr. Inge quotes, "You will never find the mere man of the world, who takes his tone from society, really care for Wordsworth's poetry." But to say this is only to say that Wordsworth had the "seeing eye" *more* than others, that mysticism is a habit of approaching the spiritual, and does not imply any particular method of approach.

The main objection to this use of the word is that it has already been appropriated for another purpose. Mr. Swinburne speaks emphatically on the subject:

> Let no reader now or ever forget that while others will admit nothing beyond the body, the mystic will admit nothing outside the soul.
>
> One thing is too certain; if we insist on having hard ground under foot all the way we shall not get far. The land lying before us, bright with fiery blossom and fruit, musical with blowing branches and falling waters, is not to be seen or travelled in save by help of such light as lies upon dissolving dreams and dividing clouds. By moonrise to the sound of wind at sunset, one may tread upon the limit of this land and gather as with muffled apprehension some soft, remote sense of the singing of its birds and flowering of its fields.

To Dr. Inge mysticism is the habit of perceiving revealed truth in immediate feeling; it is, as he says, "the love of God." In William Blake, mysticism may be, as Dr. Inge says, the habit of perceiving truth in immediate feeling; it may even be the "love of God," as the latter puts it in a more search-

ing and intimate passage. But I can scarcely think Blake believed that "everything, in being what it is, is symbolic of something higher and deeper than itself." I believe he would not have wished to distinguish between the thing and the something higher which it symbolised; the thing was already completely spiritual and could not be more spiritual. Asserting passionately that the body and soul were united, he could never have denied or mortified the flesh so as to gain access to the spirit. For him the joy of the flesh was also the joy of the spirit, and what mortified the flesh must also mortify the spirit.

Forty years ago, Mr. Swinburne wrote the most generous and illuminating work on William Blake which has ever been, or, in all probability, ever will be written. Already Alexander Gilchrist had produced a careful biography; and Dante Gabriel Rossetti had acknowledged that he owed more to the influence of Blake than to any other English poet or painter. In his magnificent manner Mr. Swinburne showed convincingly that Blake was "the single Englishman of supreme and simple poetic genius born before the closing years of the eighteenth century; the one man of that date fit, on all accounts, to rank with the old great names." Ten years ago, the present writer met an Austrian professor who spoke of Blake as one of the acknowledged geniuses of this country, and who has since written about him effectively for German readers; and yet we have

recently witnessed the amazing spectacle of papers, magazines, and lecturers trumpeting the "discovery of Blake" as a new twentieth-century achievement; books have poured forth from the publishers describing, expounding, and interpreting this rejected prophet of the eighteenth century, till he has suddenly gained a vogue comparable to that of a Stephen Phillips or a Shaw!

Curiously enough, the right of expounding Blake seems to belong to a small coterie of people who, sons of the poets, claim that the mantle of their hero has fallen upon themselves. True, Messrs. Russell and Maclagan, in their useful edition of "Jerusalem," were modest in their claims, and wrote their explanations of symbolic names clearly and succinctly—though even they could not refrain from alluding to the "true mystic" as a new and interesting thing which they had just dug up, somewhere presumably in Ireland. To Mr. Russell also we are grateful for an edition of the "Letters," which are a better criterion of Blake's character than any of the commentaries. It is Mr. Edwin Ellis, however, who claims to hold the key to the real meaning of the real Blake. So exclusively does Blake belong to Mr. Ellis that he must needs take as proven that the poet was also an Irishman—his only authority being that of a gentleman who was kind enough to tell "the whole story" of his ancestry to Mr. Yeats. Against this we have not only the poet's own reference to "English Blake," but the evidence of the two daughters of William

John Blake, of Southampton, who claimed to be second cousin of the poet, and traced his origin to the Somersetshire family and the famous Admiral.

Formerly, after diligent reading of Blake's lyrical poems and prophetic works, I felt that I had at least some dim perception of his meaning. But Mr. Ellis dispelled that agreeable illusion. No one who has not devoted years of exclusive study to these obscure works can hope to understand (Mr. Ellis would say comprehend) their meaning. Mr. Swinburne, he assures us, must have been "humiliated" to find he could not explain the "Jerusalem," and therefore called "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" the "high-water mark of Blake's genius." Dr. Garnett, again, "never knew what was the position of Blake's mind with regard to his own meaning." Where such distinguished men of letters have failed, there is no hope for the smaller student; and it is, indeed, a relief to find one interpreter who, from his inspired tripod, can pronounce just what Blake was, the precise meaning of each symbolic term, and the exact length and depths of his philosophy.

My gratitude to Mr. Ellis is bounded only by one fact—his responses are even too oracular; he is, in fact, infinitely harder to understand than Blake himself. Take, for instance, these lines:

> For men are caught by love: Woman is caught by pride.

Let not the reader think too readily that he understands these words. They mean, says Mr. Ellis:

That the masculine or intellectual is attracted by imaginative emotion, and the materialistic or experience-convinced part of our lives is attracted by the emotion of comparison, not of direct enjoyment—by the feeling of superiority, not of delight.

Or we may take the beautiful poem, "William Bond," which, as Mr. Ellis admits, is autobiographical. It tells, quite simply, a real incident in the married career of William Blake and his wife Catherine, who are called in the poem William Bond and Mary. The commentator must needs explain that "Mary" means "not merely Blake's wife, but the lyrical and emotional side of his genius." In fact, Mr. Ellis regards some of the lyrical poems and all the prophetic writings as a kind of very elaborate cipher, which he has set himself laboriously, obscurely, and pedantically to unravel. He interprets *obscurum per obscurius.* He attempts to demonstrate that which Blake said could only be perceived, not demonstrated; he argues, where Blake appealed to the perception; he apparently takes every one for a blockhead, forgetting the poet's own dictum:

He's a blockhead who wants a proof
Of what he can't perceive;
And he's a fool who tries to make
Such a blockhead believe.

Blake himself had no intention of writing about abstractions requiring hard metaphysical interpretation. In one of his letters (see Russell's edition p. 63) he remarks:

I am happy to find a great majority of fellow mortals who can elucidate by visions, and particularly they have been elucidated by children, who have taken a greater delight in contemplating my pictures than I ever hoped. . . . There is a vast majority on the side of imagination or spiritual sensation.

This last clause suggests the reason why Blake is only gaining a wide recognition in the twentieth century. The æsthetic tendency of the age is to turn away in revolt from the material actualities of life, to turn to regions of the imagination where human nature is not clogged and damped by an uncongenial environment. Rossetti anticipated this movement in his haunting, other-world poetry; contemporary writers of imagination seem to flutter their wings against the iron bars of science and materialism. Some fall back on the old classic legends; some fly to distant countries, where the high prospect of romance still lingers; one despairing of human nature has attempted to probe the psychology of a wolf; others, like Mr. Yeats, have sought a refuge for the imagination in symbolic poetry. We can understand how Blake is capable of appealing to the hungry imagination of our own era. He had nothing in common with the classical writers of the eighteenth century, who cared about form and about manners, but had not yet discovered nature, and still less the mysterious regions into which informed imagination probes. In his early "Poetical Sketches," he goes as far as the best of those who reaped the honours of the romantic movement. "Fair Elenor" might well

have inspired Coleridge when he wrote "Christabel." But when, in his mature years, he devoted himself to his muse of prophecy, he leapt, not a generation, but a century, forward.

For Blake's turgid and tempestuous writings teem with both thought and passion. He revolts against the conventionalities and pettiness which obscured the spiritual life of his own day as it does the spiritual life of to-day. Dogma and convention seemed to him the tyrants which hindered the free exercise of the faculties, just as materialism and utilitarianism starve the faculties in our own age. Newton, Locke, and Voltaire seemed to him the embodiments of the materialism, dogma and routine conventionalism which he combated—not so much the real Newton, Locke and Voltaire, whom he had never sufficiently studied, as that for which these names stood in his own time—just as Darwin and Herbert Spencer stand to-day for a host of practical errors and superstition.

I saw the limbs form'd for exercise, contemn'd, and the beauty of
Eternity look'd upon as deformity, and loveliness as a dry tree.
I saw disease forming a Body of Death around the Lamb
Of God to destroy Jerusalem, and to devour the body of Albion,
By war and stratagem to win the labour of the husbandman :
Awkwardness arm'd in steel, folly in a helmet of gold,
Weakness with horns and talons, ignorance with a rav'ning beak—
Every Emanative joy forbidden as a Crime,
And the Emanations buried alive in the earth with pomp of religion ;

Inspiration denied, Genius forbidden by laws of punishment,
I saw, terrified. I took the sighs and tears and bitter groans,
I lifted them into my Furnaces to form the spiritual sword
That lays open the hidden heart ; I drew forth the pang
Of sorrow red hot, I work'd it on my resolute anvil. . . .

He beheld man chained and absorbed in what he called his vegetative life, girt about with the errors of sense, the inventions of the abstract intellect which obscured the soul-perceptions which were, for him, the sole avenues of truth ; he saw him plunged in " the sleep of Ulro," the error of habit, in which man lives as if bewitched, occasionally stretching forth a piteous hand from the desolate ocean of human life towards the light of still lingering ideals. Our standards of good and evil are the results of intellectual abstraction. Upon these we rear a mighty edifice of habits, rules, social organisations, and cant.

And this is the manner of the Sons of Albion in their strength :
They take the two Contraries, which are called Qualities, with which
Every substance is clothed ; they name them Good and Evil.
From them they make an Abstract, which is a Negation
Not only of the Substance from which it is derived,
A murderer of its own Body, but also a murderer
Of every Divine Member ; it is the Reasoning Power,
An Abstract objecting power, that negatives everything,
This is the Spectre of Man, the Holy Reasoning Power,
And in its Holiness is closed the Abomination of Desolation.

Regarding corporeal existence as the source of all error and delusion, Blake turned his gaze steadily

inward. "Though on earth things seem permanent," he said, in his second account of the "Last Judgment" picture, "they are less permanent than a shadow, as we all know too well." "The oak dies as well as the lettuce, but its eternal image or individuality never dies, but renews by its seed." He was a visionary in the most literal and in the most complete sense of the term. When he was four years old, we are told that he saw God in a vision; when he was seven, he saw, as Gilchrist tells us, a "tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough with stars." Learn to see "not *with*, but *through* the eye," was his maxim. "Think of a white cloud as holy; you cannot love it," he says, in his notes to Swedenborg. "But of a holy man within the cloud; love springs up in your thought." Behind all things, even inanimate objects, he, like Plato, looked for the idea which was its essence; but, unlike Plato, he never denied matter. And the idea always took an individual, personal form. All that came through the channels of sense had a personal value for him; body and soul were for ever united, the obverse and the reverse of the same eternal fact. Concentrating his attention always on the imaginative issues of life, he attached as much value to dreams as to other facts, till the strange, grotesque familiars of his imaginative life became at the same time persons and ideas with which he always lived. His whole art, both as a painter and as a poet, was to copy, not from objects

as we see them by the senses, but as they were presented to his imagination.

"I know that this world is a world of imagination and vision," he says, in a letter to Dr. Trusler. "I see everything I paint in this world; but everybody does not see alike. . . . Some see Nature all ridicule and deformity, and by these I shall not regulate my proportions; and some scarce see Nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination, Nature is imagination itself. As a man is, so he sees. As the eye is formed, such are its powers. You certainly mistake, when you say that the visions of fancy are not to be found in this world."

Of such imaginative stuff were the portentous, strange-named persons and monsters which stalk through the pages of the prophecies, the spirits who "dictated" to him when he wrote. He lived among them, he called them by their names, and when he wrote he wrote about them scarcely heeding the fact that his readers had not been with him among them, so as to know who and what they were. As he framed his thoughts about life, so these creatures framed themselves in his head, and whether or not they were living, external spirits is not for mortals to decide. He did not write by a code, as Mr. Ellis seems to think, though no doubt it is possible to use long periphrases to express the conjunction of ideas which accompanied his so-called "symbolic" characters. Let those who have the time and energy unravel these conjunctions of ideas; others may be better occupied in sharpening their senses and trying to perceive where Blake perceived, and hear the

voices of "Albion" and "Jerusalem" piercing the distances of chaos.

Blake was one of those odd results which come from a scanty education, little commingling with society, and a great but untamed spirit. There was nothing in his own age with which he was in sympathy, and so there was nothing to tone down the proud, eccentric bent of his genius. The pure loveliness of his earlier poems—and among these I cannot refrain from saying that to me "The Book of Thel" is a supremely lovely poem—gave way to the mighty, discordant din of the prophecies. With all respect to Mr. Ellis, we shall never discover the full meaning of these later works till we have learnt to live among the same images of the imagination with which Blake lived. Much of it was not poetry —much of it was mere waywardness and obstinacy— but most of it was a profound expression of thought and passion, bound up with the vision of what at least suggests eternal purpose and eternal truth.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SELF-CONSCIOUS POET

It is hard to believe that any age could be so bleak and bare and wholly deficient in the stuff of imagination that poets could find in it no means of keeping alive the spirit within them. We have seen how some people spend their force in denouncing the civilisation which has bred us in corruption ; and how some from very weariness and disgust have turned to distant lands and even the kingdom of the brutes, where there are still worlds for the imagination to conquer. How is it, then, with the poets ? For surely every true poet must be a creature born of his generation to express its finest feelings and ideals, whose right to exist is that he interprets the eternal laws of the universe in terms which fit the changing moods of his age, who shows the same flame of the sun shining upon different worlds. Can any age be so sordid that it cannot be touched by poetry, or so wise that it does not need it ? Yet how many critics tell us that there is no poetry now like the old poetry—as they repeat often the old lament which was wafted over the sea to ancient shipmen, " Pan is dead ! "

But if we no longer have the old poets with us, to pour forth spontaneous strains of music, what must we say of the new poets who still weave rhythm and rhyme to the tune of modern ideas? What have they made of the materialism and realism of the age? What have they made of the scientific spirit of certainty which has no reverence for the unknown? Have they themselves become dogmatic, self-conscious, or affected in a dogmatic, self-conscious, affected age, for ever thinking egotistically of themselves in relation to their own art? From self-consciousness we may be sure they cannot escape, for to live in this age and to think at all, is to be self-critical, introspective, full of the emotions of the self-conscious soul. That is one of the conditions of modern literature, that the writer should always be thinking about ideas and contemplating the subject which thinks; there is no escape possible; he must face the inevitable, and make of it what he can.

At first perhaps he attempts to shirk the task; he will fly to some spiritual sphere where mere fact, made ugly and unresponsive by exhaustive criticism, is not there to hinder his flight. But to remain there is to be false and ineffectual; the first thing the young poet must learn, said Goethe, is to shun the tyranny of the universal. His theme must somehow be made to interpret the concrete realities of life, and the modern poet must face the difficulty of making beauty out of the unbeautiful, imagi-

nation out of the insolently practical, meaning and truth out of the prosaic correlation of facts given in the self-subsistent universe of science. Can he see romance in this unpromising material? Can he bridge this resisting chaos, or make it the base on which to rest the ladder of infinity?

Nothing is more natural than that his arrested flight should take the form of what is called mysticism; that the things of experience should be regarded as valuable only in so far as they are symbols of something which lies beyond them; that Prospero's magic should be made more real than life "rounded with a sleep."

> These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
> Are melted into air, into thin air:
> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherits, shall dissolve,
> And, like this unsubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind.

It has already been remarked that Blake, the king of the mystics, has now for the first time been welcomed as a great poet, and many visionaries have been drawn to him, forgetting that whilst he was proclaiming the essential spirituality of matter he was at the same moment asserting and revelling in that physical nature which was for him not the symbol, but the very substance of the spiritual.

Of the modern poets Mr. W. B. Yeats has most of all fallen under the influence of Blake, and the best that is in him seems often to be prompted by the same impulse which drove his great predecessor into poetry. But we are bound to ask two questions: How far, in the case of Mr. Yeats, has the dream been not only a dream, but a vision; and again, How far has the conventional, reflective spirit of his time tended to extinguish the genuine fire of poetic imagination?

We have gradually come to think of Mr. Yeats as the greatest of the younger poets who use the English tongue. For, make of them what we will, we must recognise that his early poems come to us fresh in their passion of inspiration, revealing mastery of form, magic of phrase, the stamp of individuality. Over and over again he has painted for us in narrative or lit up for us in dialogue a beautiful world of images and dreams, where the concrete things are symbols of an ordered truth behind them. Sometimes we have been made to feel, as in Maeterlinck's work, that tense atmosphere as of souls speaking to souls; sometimes we have been carried back to the primeval terrors and desires of the Celtic race, grimly modified by the self-consciousness of modern psychology. Whether it has or has not been too vague and subliminal, at least it has been the poetry of vivid, real ideas, beautifully and often strongly expressed; at least there has been creative force and imagination stamped into language.

I say the "earlier poems," for to study his later works is to feel that the author has not gone so far or so deep as in, say, "The Countess Cathleen," or "The Land of Heart's Desire." In those plays he seemed to be writing from the fullness of his heart, from the sense that there were things in him which had to be uttered. But later I cannot but feel that he has been evolving a system of poetry *a priori*, and that his theory has got the better of his art. If we remember that Mr. Yeats himself is a product of English literature, and that the main literary influences which shaped him have been English influences; that he has confined himself for the most part to Irish legends, under the idea of turning to account the national traditions of Ireland, and reviving the Nationalist aspirations of young idealists with their new stock of emotions; and if, thirdly, we remember that he has turned his attention almost exclusively to writing only that which can also be acted, then it is obvious that he has put fetters upon his genius which it is doubtful if his or any other genius could possibly endure. What is the result in, let us say, the collection of "Poems, 1899–1905"? It is good poetry, it is sound poetry; but only very occasionally do we feel that it is inspired poetry; it hardly ever rises to some memorable felicity of phrase, or strikes out of language the magic spark of an idea.

But I suppose Mr. Yeats would say that these plays must be judged, not merely as poetry, but as

dramas which can be represented with effect upon the stage—I take it that they have been acted with success and have been proved capable of holding an audience. The author in fact has been making a prolonged study of stage technique ; while he writes he has been thinking of the effect of uttered words, of the necessities of exits and entrances, of stage furniture, of musical accompaniments, and even of the prevailing colours of scenery and dresses. His method, indeed, is not that of Mr. Stephen Phillips, who is a realist and a sentimentalist, while Mr. Yeats is an idealist and a mystic. But he too has fallen foul a little of his own artifice. He has allowed his conventionalised mode of declamation to beguile him at times into long-drawn nothings which he would never have permitted when he was thinking primarily of poetry. Take the opening lines of "The Shadowy Waters" :

> First Sailor. Has he not led us into these waste waters
> For long enough?
> Second Sailor. Aye, long and long enough.

That too familiar trick of repetition can only be carried off by the impressive utterance of the actor. Contrast it with the opening lines of "The Countess Cathleen" :

> Maire. You are all thumbs.
> Teig. Hear how the dog bays, mother,
> And how the grey hen flutters in the coop.
> Strange things are going up and down the land,

These famine times : by Tubber-vanach cross-roads
A woman met a man with ears spread out,
And they moved up and down like wings of bats.

This is the poetry that grips us, that instantly brings us into the true atmosphere. But "The Shadowy Waters," beautiful as are many passages in it, is rather a picture with a motto written under it than a poem. Forgael is voyaging perilously on a ship seeking the permanent reality which underlies the desire of every lover when he loves :

Where the world ends
The mind is made unchanging, for it finds
Miracle, ecstasy, the impossible hope,
The flagstone under all, the fire of fires,
The roots of the world.

We are too much dependent on that grim picture of a ship and the waste of waters, which was ludicrously though unintentionally caricatured in Mr. Comyns Carr's amusing melodrama "Tristram and Iseult." But often the play is illumined by passages such as this speech of Dectora, who has been subdued by the "magic spell" of the harp :

What do I care,
Now that my body has begun to dream,
And you have grown to be a burning sod
In the imagination and intellect ?
If something that's most fabulous were true—
If you had taken me by magic spells,
And killed a lover or husband at my feet—
I would not let you speak, for I would know

That it was yesterday and not to-day
I loved him ; I would cover up my ears,
As I am doing now.

Even there it is a shock to find that the poet can make a line out of *imagination* and *intellect.*

In the few lyric poems included in this same collection, Mr. Yeats is more truly himself. "Never give all the heart," which suggests

Never seek to tell thy love,
Love that never told can be,

is only one of many instances which remind us of Blake's influence. Yet there is the note of truth and absolute sincerity in these lyric poems. Beautifully he writes of

The leafy paths that the witches take,
Who come with their crowns of pearl and their spindles of wool,
And their secret smile, out of the depths of the lake.

Or of Baile and Aillinn, who died of love :

And poets found, old writers say,
A yew tree where his body lay ;
But a wild apple hid the grass
With its sweet blossom where hers was ;
And being in good heart, because
A better time had come again
After the deaths of many men,
And that long fighting at the ford,
They wrote on tablets of thin board,
Made of the apple and the yew,
All the love stories that they knew.

Mr. Yeats has the lyrical power of a true poet, and again and again he has shown that he can command the language of blank verse. He set out on his poetical career with the inspired faculty of seeing life in its emotional and beautiful aspects, prepared to burst the bonds which the scientific intellect has imposed on the imagination, to reach, through mysticism, the rare atmosphere of romance. But the malady of the age has infected his blood; even he has been gripped by it. It has turned him from poetry to criticism, to analysing the elements of which his mysticism is composed, to the reduction of his own genius to formulæ. The "Irish literary movement" has been changed from a movement into a cult, and artistic effects are to be secured by arithmetical calculations rather than by the united, spontaneous efforts of a band of artists. Mr. Yeats himself has been falling into mannerisms begotten in the theatre and succumbing to the temptations of the poet with a purpose. It remains to be seen whether by tearing himself from the self-conscious environment which embraces him like an octopus, he can regain the emotional freedom of poetry.

If the influence of the time is so strong upon the artistic temperament of Mr. Yeats, what form may we not expect it to take in the case of a writer who has identified himself with the popular taste of recent years—such a one as Mr. Stephen Phillips? The best of his plays, I think, is "Paolo and Fran-

cesca," but this was written before his dramatic experience had taught him what is likely to please a popular audience. So I prefer to discuss his two later plays, "Ulysses" and "Nero." The former is instructive because, in using the whole story of the Odyssey, Mr. Phillips enables us to see how differently the same subject is treated by the romantic popular poets of Greece on the one hand and a self-consciously sentimental popular poet of modern England on the other.

The high rank which is claimed for Mr. Phillips among contemporary poets compels us to give him credit for a plan and a meaning which may at first have escaped our notice. He has been bold enough to use the whole story of the Odyssey, not, what other poets have used before, a single incident from the epic, a flower in the garden from which the honey is to be extracted, but the main plot, the broad landscape which has been painted for us so gorgeously by Homer. But it is not enough to condemn Mr. Phillips with the truism "epic is one thing, drama is another," with just one of those assertions, in fact, "which are so true that they are generally false." The story of the Odyssey has been pruned and altered. The moral ideas and sentiments are imposed by the modern poet upon the material presented to him by the ancient. If we carefully follow his play we shall find that his plan seems to have been something like this. The prologue in heaven foreshadows the destiny of Ulysses; the gods determine

in the first place to release Ulysses from the magic of Calypso, or from the tangle of his own waywardness; and secondly, to allow him, by dint of toil and strife, by virtue of renewed love for wife and home, to wreak vengeance upon the suitors who had usurped his place in his temporarily forgotten Ithaca. When we are shown in the first scene the insolence of the suitors and the pitiable plight of Penelope and Telemachus, our thoughts are to turn upon the husband and father who is absent. In the second scene we are confronted with Ulysses himself at Ogygia, held a willing captive by the enchantments of Calypso, till the messenger of the gods wakens him from his luscious dreams of divinity so that he craves to realise his human self, and his human interests in Penelope and his home in Ithaca. Believing anew in his fate, he is ready to brave the horrors of Hell in order to win his way back across the sea. His fearful and random questionings of the phantoms in Hades are to be answered when he meets the shade of his mother, Anticleia, symbol of his own kith and kin. He hears her voice:

> Ulysses!
>
> Ulysses. Ah, who calls me by name?
>
> Anticleia. Ulysses!
>
> Ulysses. And the voice, tho' faint it comes,
> Is yet the voice of one that was a woman.
>
> Anticleia. Ulysses!
>
> Ulysses. And it goes through all my blood.
> Hermes, there is one near me whom I loved.

The pathos in this is to strike the note characteristic of the whole play; evidently the incident is to form a link between the mental awakening in the island of Ogygia and the return to Ithaca. The last act is to bring the triumph and the nemesis. The wrath of the gods, hitherto directed upon Ulysses, is now propitiated by his steadfast love for home and family, so that he is restored and allowed to take vengeance upon the suitors.

In attempting to work out this modern interpretation of an old story it happens that all the circumstances are against Mr. Phillips. In choosing the main plot of the Odyssey as his subject, he has consciously or unconsciously thrown out his challenge for comparison with Homer. If he had elected to dwell upon a single incident of the Odyssey he would have challenged no such comparison. But just as a Greek tragedian who took the "Oresteia" as his theme had to face comparison with Aeschylus, or as any modern poet who might write on the epic of Arthur would have to be compared with Mallory or Tennyson, so Mr. Phillips has deliberately chosen to give battle to Homer on his own ground. It is scarcely necessary to say that he comes out worsted. Homer has left an "Homeric atmosphere" so keen and vitalising that it is oppressive to breathe after it the humid air of the modern poetic hot-house.

The prologue shows us the gods assembled in heaven. Homer was convincing when he drew his

rollicking, humorous gods, because he believed in them, but neither Mr. Phillips nor his readers have any serious confidence in the powers for good or for evil of Poseidon or Athene. Now and again we are treated to something little better than doggerel, as for instance when Poseidon says:

> Sire! if this insolence unpunished go
> We soon shall lack all reverence below;
> It will be said, "the arm of Zeus doth shake,
> Let none henceforward at his thunder quake!"

And the effect is somewhat grotesque when Zeus thunders softly and loudly by turns, and then admits:

> That Danae, Leda, Leto, all had place
> In my most broad beneficent embrace.

When we have passed the prologue we have passed the worst. But all through the play there is the perpetual challenge of comparison with Homer. In the following lines Ulysses is content to be held captive by the magic of the Circæan Calypso:

> I'll drift no more upon the dreary sea.
> No yearning have I now, and no desire.
> Here would I be, at ease upon this isle
> Set in the glassy ocean's azure swoon,
> With sward of parsley and of violet,
> And poplars shivering in a silvery dream,
> And smell of cedar sawn, and sandal wood,
> And these low-crying birds that haunt the deep.

Compare these soft, sibilant lines with this passage in the Odyssey:

ἥματα δ' ἐν πέτρῃσι καὶ ἠιόνεσσι καθίζων
δάκρυσι καὶ στοναχῇσι καὶ ἄλγεσι θυμὸν ἐρέχθων
πόντον ἐπ' ἀτρύγετον δερκέσκετο δάκρυα λείβων.

or even with Mr. Lang's unequalled prose translation:

And in the day time he would sit on the rocks and on the beach, straining his soul with tears, and groans, and griefs, and through his tears he would look wistfully over the unharvested deep.

The kaleidoscopic view of apparitions in the under world, even though relieved by the striking passage where Anticleia comes in, is a poor substitute for that meeting of Odysseus, on the mead of Asphodel, with the spirits of the dead.

The dramatic effects, I need hardly say, are carefully thought out, and there is much that is calculated to give pleasure. There is briskness and spirit in the lines:

To spring alive upon her precipices,
And hurl the singing spear into the air.

Or in

See!
The ship moves! Hark, their shouts! She moves! She moves.
Hear you the glorying shingle cry beneath her?
She spreads her wings to fly upon the deep!

The transition from "Paolo and Francesca" to "Ulysses" and from "Ulysses" to "Nero" corresponds to the popular ascension and the artistic downfall of Mr. Phillips. At a very early stage in

his career he began to think more of the audience than of his art; to study how to express sentiments that would win applause rather than ideas poetically wedded to language. "In poetry and prose," says the Earl of Shaftesbury in his "Advice to an Author," "the astonishing part or what commonly passes for sublime, is formed by the variety of figures, the multiplicity of metaphors, and by quitting as much as possible the natural and easy way of expression for that which is most unlike to humanity or ordinary uses." The impression which one gets from reading "Nero" is that the author is always making a studied effort after the "sublime" in Shaftesbury's sense of the term.

To see this play acted is to feel sure that it was written primarily to be read; and to read it is to believe that it was written for the theatre. Mr. Phillips has obviously kept before himself this double object; as we read we can feel him arranging the persons on the stage; we can see him placing the man with the trumpet behind the scenes to blare out the death of Agrippina. Stage-craft in the writing no less than in the stage directions obtrudes itself at every turn. Nevertheless that it is written to be read is shown by innumerable artifices of style which would be missed by an audience in a theatre.

Any one who has read Mr. Henderson's "Life and Principles of the Emperor Nero" will see that he has given Mr. Phillips his conception of the character. Mr. Henderson is a clever and ingenious

historian skilled in proving paradoxes by reference to chapter and verse in his authorities. Mr. Phillips accepts these paradoxes, and reproduces the white-washed Nero as the protagonist in his drama. He appears as an almost reputable emperor, having no vices beyond a desire to murder his friends and steal other people's wives, and suffering from the delusion that he is an artist born to ravish men's souls with his poetry and his songs.

> Nero. I cannot, sirs, so suddenly return
> Unto life's dreary business, or descend
> Out of the real to the unreal; from that
> Which is to that which is not. Leave me still,
> From art to empire is too swift a drop.

Whatever he does, he is represented as doing with an eye to artistic effect. When he is about to murder his mother he arranges the matter to suit his æsthetic sense. But besides being a murderer, a profligate, and an artist, he also has a tender and sensitive soul, prone to pathos. When he has decided to kill Agrippina he is congratulated on the acting of his kisses, and replies "passionately" in the following sententious lines:

> Was I all actor then? That which I feigned
> I felt, and when it was my cue to kiss her,
> The whole of childhood rushed into the kiss.
> When it was in my part to cling about her,
> I clung about her mad with memories.
> The water in my eyes rose from my soul,
> And flooding from the heart ran down my cheek.

Did my voice tremble ? Then it trembled true
With human agony behind the art.
Gods ! What a scene !

This lightning transition from feigning to feeling and from feeling to thinking of oneself as feeling is a perfect trait of the modern self-conscious poet.

The real subject of the drama is the death of Agrippina, to which end everything in the first three acts is subordinated. But when it happens there is no great sense of catastrophe. Nero has already killed too many people to make one more murder a matter of much moment, and in any case Agrippina was so abandoned a woman that her execution was almost a duty to the State. After the event however he is pursued by the shade of his mother, as Orestes was pursued by the Furies ; and when he sees the flames rising from the city of Rome he accepts it as an atonement. In an outburst of lyrical hysteria Nero falls in a swoon, and the play comes to an abrupt end.

What Mr. Phillips really understands is the machinery of play-making and emotion-mongering. He knows his technique, putting in touches of tragic irony, creating moments which cause astonishment, employing devices of speech calculated to arouse curiosity. His style of writing varies considerably ; but it takes two general forms, one, the most natural to him, being like the soft whispers of modern love on the stage ; the other, a borrowed form, is culled from the Elizabethan poets, especially Shakespeare,

though it is grandiloquently modern. Here is an instance of the latter style:

> Wonderful! This gives beauty to an act
> Which else were ugly and of me unworthy.
> So mighty is she that her proper doom
> Could come but by some elemental aid.
> Her splendid trouble asketh but the sea
> For sepulchre: her spirit limitless
> A multitudinous and roaring grave.
> Here's nothing sordid, nothing vulgar. I
> Consign her to the uproar whence she came.
> Be the crime vast enough it seems not crime.
> I, as befits me, call on great allies.
> I make a compact with the elements.
> And here my agents are the very winds,
> The waves my servants, and the night my friend.

An example of Mr. Phillips's more natural style comes on the same page:

> On the moon I can rely.
> Last night I wrote to her a glimmering verse;
> She is white with a wan passion for my lips.
> The moon will succour me. Depart from me—
> Trouble me not with human faces now.

Still better as an example is the following passage:

> Child, I have done with scorn, with bitter words,
> With taunt, with gibe. Now I ask only pity—
> A little pity from flesh that I conceived,
> A little mercy from the body I bore,
> And touches from the baby hands I kissed.
> Nothing I ask of you, only to love me,
> And if not that, to bear with me a while

Who have borne much for you : no, Nero, child,
I will not weary you, I yearn for you.
Forgive me all the deeds that I have done for you,
Forget the great love I have spent on you,
Pardon the long, long life for you endured.

It is all fluent, soft, caressing, redolent of the workshop, with an effect like that of an unhealthy perfume. "Clever" and "rhythmic" it may be, but it is not true to any moral facts of life, nor in touch with the important emotions. When Agrippina speaks of

The hesitating tardy bird-like word
And the sweet slur of r's

she is exactly describing Mr. Phillips's verse, which makes us see the poet's artifice, his arranging of consonants and vowels, and the turning on of sentiments which flow like water from a tap, copious and thin.

It is with mingled pleasure and disappointment that I turn to the poems of Mr. John Davidson ; with pleasure, because he is an infinitely better poet than Mr. Phillips; with disappointment, because he has allowed his disgust with modern life to lead him into a bitter attack upon the worn-out faiths and enthusiasms of society, while himself falling a prey to the clap-trap philosophy of the scientific materialists. I shall not say much about his latest play, "The Triumph of Mammon," which might be taken as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the introspective method in art. He frankly declares that

this is a new poetry based upon supreme egotism, an acceptance of the life of physical experience as the sole reality. The book is didactic, exegetic, and scientific even in its language; the blank verse is energetic and declamatory, but not poetical; the protest against religion and morality is as coarse as it is uncompromising. The play exists in order to preach this creed:

> To be a beast? it is to be a star!
> Nothing is bestial, nothing mean or base;
> For all is Universe, an infinite
> Ethereal way and being of myriad-minded
> Matter: substance and soul, all matter, wanton
> As lightning, chaste as light, diverse as sin.

To Mr. Davidson it is the opposite of a reproach to say that he is self-conscious. Supreme self-consciousness allied to supreme power and selfishness is the ideal he pretends to cherish. His hero declares with pride:

> But I am I, not Baldur: I am the king,
> Greater than Baldur, greater than all gods.
> The first of men to be self-conscious. Man
> Has come! The former cry was, or the hope,
> The gods arrive, the heroes at their heels;
> But I announce, at last, self-conscious man,
> Greater than devil, angel, hero, god.

The answer to that might be found in the Button-moulder's reply to Peer Gynt:

> To be oneself is: to slay oneself.
> But on you that answer is doubtless lost.

But how much more pleasing it is to return to the real John Davidson, the unspoilt poet, the uncorrupted philosopher who wrote that delightful volume of "Holiday and other Poems." In these he discarded his rhetorical blank verse, his ponderous gnomes, his distorted theories, letting his imagination loose in a form of "re-echoing rhyme" derived from Edgar Allan Poe, venting himself in lavish but beautiful ornament. But this much, at least, we shall feel almost at the outset—that here there is no mere reproduction of old poetic forms slenderly and slightly conceived; no indulgence in sentimental assonances; no mere tricking out of commonplaces in sibilant phrases. At least we have here the feeling for language, the feeling for things, and a conscious direction of power towards a definitely conceived goal of beautiful and musical expression. If we read only one out of a dozen poems included in this book, we shall know at once that Mr. Davidson is an artist who moves in a world of images which are at the same time his life and his art. At first, when reading one or two of the weaker poems, we may not be sure whether the effect was produced by cleverness imposing itself by tricks of speech upon the ear, or whether it came from genius which would continue to satisfy. But to read further was to be sure that both causes were present. Artifice there is in every line and every stanza, but in the best passages it is used with knowledge and skill backed up by the healthiest and sanest feeling.

To quote short passages would be almost as unfair as it would be to play single bars of a musical symphony. Each poem is nothing if not a total effect. Mr. Davidson makes use of the refrain, the constant repetition of the phrase and the re-echoing rhyme, the cumulation of sound upon sound, as if different instruments in the orchestra or different parts in the chorus caught up and flung back the essential theme amid numberless variations. I wish I could suggest the strange effect of the lay of the "runnable stag." The following stanzas will give but the faintest idea, for not only does the effect of each phrase depend upon its magical recurrence and the variation, but also stanza is balanced against stanza; and he who reads coldly through several stanzas will at the end marvel at the magical insistence upon an idea:

When he turned at bay in the leafy gloom,
In the emerald gloom where the brook ran deep,
He heard in the distance the rollers boom,
And he saw in a vision of peaceful sleep,
In a wonderful vision of sleep,
A stag of warrant, a stag, a stag,
A runnable stag in a jewelled bed,
Under the sheltering ocean dead,
A stag, a runnable stag.

So a fateful hope lit up his eye,
And he opened his nostrils wide again,
And he tossed his branching antlers high
As he headed the hunt down the Charlock glen,
As he raced down the echoing glen

For five miles more, the stag, the stag,
For twenty miles, and five and five,
Not to be caught now, dead or alive,
The stag, the runnable stag.

Three hundred gentlemen, able to ride,
Three hundred horses as gallant and free,
Beheld him escape on the evening tide,
Far out till he sank in the Severn Sea,
Till he sank in the depths of the sea—
The stag, the buoyant stag, the stag
That slept at last in a jewelled bed
Under the sheltering ocean spread,
The stag, the runnable stag.

If Mr. Davidson had merely learnt from Poe and Thomas Hood some technical devices for producing an effect we might accuse him of verbal dexterity. He has learnt these devices, and does not hide them ; but his artifice serves his art because he has strength of feeling, buoyancy of mind, an optimistic but intelligent faith, a consciousness of the infinite behind the concrete. Now and again we feel that he is, like his own Vivian, " in the snare of a sovran rhyme" ; and then are reminded that

enchantments prevail,
And things are as strange as they seem.

And as rhyme opens out behind rhyme, phrase behind phrase, we feel the awakening of senses revealed by other senses, the movement from the concrete to the mysterious as finally mere reduplication becomes suggestive and symbolic of the infinite.

He shows us not only birds and flowers and trees and the beauty of the rain upon the sodden earth of Epping Forest, but streets and houses and mirthful and sorrowing crowds.

> The adolescent world
> Is but beginning now :
> And men are men at last.

Often he shows something of the alliterative skill of Mr. Swinburne:

> With perfume entangle the light
> And powder the woodland with pearl.

But this is merely superficial resemblance. He has combined a number of qualities into a character which I think is his own. "St. Mark's Eve" is one of the most beautiful poems, with its fantasy of Epping Forest, and the story of the birds and the elfins and

> The mellow quarter chime
> From the belfry of Highbeach Tower.

Here too the effect is cumulative, and cannot be given by quotation. But I may risk giving Vivian's conclusion to his adventures in the forest :

> But the nightingales sang on
> Like welling founts of sound,
> As the saffron sunset paler shone
> And the darkness grew profound ;
> The nightingales sang on
> And the sleepless cuckoos beat
> Their dulcimers anon, anon,
> In the echoing woodland street—

Their golden dulcimers anon
  In every forest street.
And lo! from their secret bowers
  In the shadowy depths of the chace,
With lanterns jewelled like flowers
  In state at a stately pace—
The elfin-folk from their hallowed bowers
  In the innermost shrine of the chace,
Come, swinging their fragrant and luminous flowers,
  To dance in the market-place—
Came with their dances and lanterned flowers
  To the forest's market-place.
And I watched them dancing for hours
  In elfin pomp and state:
I saw the elves and I watched them for hours,
  And therefore I come so late.

Here then is the power of expression, the faculty or imagination, the insight into modern life and the romantic inspiration—the sense of a beginning—which are requisites of poetry. It would be lamentable to think that the flame in this poet is being dimmed and extinguished.

CHAPTER XIV

THE NEW ROMANCE

"Could Shakespeare give a theory of Shakespeare?" asks Emerson. "Could ever a man of prodigious mathematical genius convey to others any insight into his methods? If he could communicate that secret, instantly it would lose all its exaggerated value, blending with the daylight and the vital energy, the power to stand and to go." We have seen how the poet, as well as the mathematician, has been explaining himself, losing much of his value when all his inner force is expressed under the neat categories of science. We have passed on from modern to modern, from vanity to vanities, touching light here and there, striking at moments what seemed to be some new vein of gold, but from each hope we have fallen back with a sense of disappointment. We have sought to apply the touchstone of romance; we have been answered by the hollow thud of the false science. It may be that our standard has been arbitrary, that our requirements have too personal a basis; but they are the requirements at least of thousands of moderns, who cannot find satisfaction in these positive forms of expression.

We have recognised on the one hand that we cannot escape from the bond of self-consciousness; on the other hand that we need the mystery, the faith, the religion, the romance—call it what you will—the wonderfulness of a life and a literature that will lead us from the apparently known to the less known, the inexplicable, the superhuman, the adorable. We seem to pride ourselves on a sort of spurious knowledge, and cry out for something incompatible with it.

It is always open to us to explain that we are in a decadent, exhausted stage like that reached by the Roman Empire before it was swept away by the barbarian invasions. But human nature cannot readily acquiesce in its own decay; nor does this explanation seem consistent with the extraordinary energy and restlessness which everywhere abound in Western Europe. We may most of us be dissatisfied, but we are hopeful of the future; we may realise our deficiencies, but we do not believe they are without remedy. The changes in our national life are swift; every year we may perceive that the national temperament has altered. Surely we are not to be permanently thrown back by our advance, to be dwarfed by the increase of knowledge which has spread misery.

What we have been seeking throughout in contemporary literature is something which will satisfy the human need for wonder and reverence, that stimulating quality which sets the reader on the

road of romantic adventure, and puts him in touch with the strange, stirring beauty of nature, humanity, and things half divine, half human. And as we have tried to examine certain men and certain books we have seen that fearful obstacles stand in the way, that we are all bound hand and foot not so much by material chains as by those habits and modes of thought into which we are all born. The things that we ought to see *through* have become opaque ; our mental windows have become so strong and solid that they defeat their own object. Some respect is due even to the failures of many modern artists, if only because they are working with tremendous odds against them. They cannot exist apart from the self-consciousness which is born of science, and they are set the task of achieving a romantic effect through a medium which seems to be hostile.

Shall we then, in looking round among writers living or but recently dead, find any who have both accepted the facts of the over-exploited modern world and at the same time read into it the fine elements of romantic perception, blending the world as we are able to see it with the world as artist and prophet have seen it in the past? It is with much hesitancy that I turn to an author who is now commonly styled a master of romance, who would still be at the height of his powers had not premature death cut short his career. I allude to Robert Louis Stevenson.

I know that there are still a few enemies of this

man who would detract from his fame, and many friends who laud him to the skies with ill-balanced eulogy. But we shall be fairly expressing the general verdict if we say that he is now accepted as a master of what is called romance. Here the term comes glibly; here at least there is no doubt about its use. It is in respect of their romantic quality that his novels are compared to those of Scott or Dumas, in respect of the fact that he shows us the joy or terror of marvellous action, creating the thrill of wonder in movement and the emotions aroused by movement. And yet it needs but little reflection to see how different is the material upon which he works from the material they used, and how different are his methods. The earlier writers, keeping themselves and their thoughts in the background, simply showed us men and things from without; they were impersonal and objective. But no sincere modern author can possibly adopt this method of treatment, for the life about him has changed and he has changed with it. Stevenson was the product of an analytic, psychological age, and he himself, true to his time, was supremely self-conscious. And yet he took the material to his hand and somehow forced it to produce what the imagination demands. His critics have made it a ground of attack that he was a *poseur*, betraying no less in his writings than in his life the self-consciousness of the actor. It is this very fact which should compel us to recognise his originality and

greatness. It is perfectly true that he always had a defined idea of himself, R. L. S., in relation to his own experiences, his writing, and his characters —that fact is abundantly shown in his letters. But he never sought to be impersonal; he quite wilfully adopted an attitude towards life; it was his supreme achievement that he interpreted usually humdrum things in terms of this attitude of his towards life, in terms of his own romantic experience. He had, for instance, the imagination to remember and idealise his own boyhood, and to retain deliberately in his mature years the play and earnest, the Arabian Nights atmosphere of his youth, learning to cherish these recollections and compel the play to seem earnest, the humdrum fantastic, the ordinary to be fraught with magical meaning.

It is because he used and turned to good purpose the qualities which in others have been defects that he succeeded in bringing something new into English literature. Unlike so many moderns, who resemble Alexander the Great in only one respect, he did not sigh because there are no more worlds to conquer, or because there is no untravelled Pacific beyond Darien, but set himself rather to a sort of intensive culture, and made it his business to bring out the marvellous and the unexpected from the midst of the familiar. He knew that he could never produce a romantic effect from the bare material used by Scott or Dumas; that mere objective actions described by

him would create no wonder in the practical modern mind. What he had to do was to invest common things with a new meaning, to hint at the marvellous possibilities which might lurk behind the cut of a coat or the ferocity of an oath—in a word, to bring out of every single thing in life its latent qualities of romance. The result is that he seems to be marching through a land and an atmosphere of his own, where the men are strange men, and the lights are garish, and there is a queer noise of music borne upon the wind. And yet this land, for all its strangeness, is found to be the land we knew before, but seen under a new perspective, upon a more imaginative plane.

Stevenson, it is true, did not precisely invent his romantic method. To some extent Edgar Allan Poe, to a great extent Herman Melville, anticipated him in the production of self-conscious romance. But it is his great merit that he was capable of both adopting a certain literary perspective, and handing on a new faculty for perception to the generation that has followed him. The origin of many sentiments now perfectly common among us may be traced, I believe, to his influence. For instance, Mr. E. V. Lucas, in his book on London, speaks of the romance of the hansom cabs, the drivers of which move off at a moment's notice to any part of the metropolitan world like knights on a chivalrous quest. This is to us now an ordinary enough, even a trite, sentiment, but it is one which would not

have been likely to occur to any one fifty years ago. It was Stevenson more than any one else who familiarised us with this kind of perspective, who taught us to see the romance of daily life, the sudden gleams as from another world which illumine the dull and banish the conventional. He has established a new romantic school for which the central fact is the contact of the personal, conscious self with the mystery of environment.

His literary career falls naturally into two periods, in the earlier of which he is perhaps more frankly, or at least more obviously, introspective and egotistic. It includes such works as "An Inland Voyage," "Travels with a Donkey," "The Amateur Emigrant," "Virginibus Puerisque," "Men and Books," and "The New Arabian Nights." In these he may be seen wrestling with his style—exuberant in his fancy, free in his use of antithesis, exulting in each felicitous or forcible phrase, and sometimes exaggerating the rhythmic movement of his sentences. Often there is an appearance of strain in the writing. At this period he is still too often the "clever young man." Living in his own world of imagination he hates the purely conventional, and delights in the one-sided truth of paradox. He feels immensely the beauty and richness of nature and natural things, yet does not forget that he is Stevenson the artist feeling them as an artist should feel. Thus when he writes he is not so much posing, as triumphing in the deft use of tools

by means of which the manifold world becomes the subject of his art.

It is not only the art of writing, but the more complete art of living and experiencing, that attracts him. He longs above all things to experience the wild adventures of his own heroes. If he cannot meet a real giant in his walks abroad at least such or such a one he can "take to be a nobleman in masquerade," and that at a moment's notice, like the "young man with the cream tarts," when he casually meets Colonel Geraldine. He longs always to feel the delightful sensation of peril, romantic peril, if it only means lighting a pipe at the expense of upsetting a boat—"I had never before weighed a comfortable pipe of tobacco against an obvious risk, and gravely elected for the comfortable pipe." Hence in these earlier works the personal element is always pronounced. If it is not his own personal experiences he is describing, then it is a strongly personal element in his art. "Every book is, in an intimate sense, a circular letter to the friends of him who writes it," he says in a letter to Sydney Colvin.

In his "Travels with a Donkey" he is the adventurer pure and simple, frankly looking out for a heightening of the emotions, a quickening of the pulse, a realising of the unexpected, the fearful and the beautiful. He met his adventure that night he spent among the woods of Gévaudan, sleeping in the open air among the trees, his donkey tethered close by :

I have been after an adventure all my life, a pure, dispassionate adventure, such as befell early and heroic voyagers ; and thus to be found by morning in a random woodside nook in Gévaudan—not knowing north from south, as strange to my surroundings as the first man upon the earth, an inland castaway—was to find a fraction of my day-dreams realised. I was on the skirts of a little wood of birch, sprinkled with a few beeches ; behind, it adjoined another wood of fir ; and in front, it broke up and went down in open order into a shallow and meadowy dale. All around these were bare hill-tops, some near, some far away, as the perspective closed or opened, but none apparently much higher than the rest. The wind huddled the trees. The golden specks of autumn in the birches tossed shiveringly. Overhead the sky was full of strings and shreds of vapour flying, vanishing, reappearing, and turning about our axis like tumblers, as the wind hounded them through heaven. It was wild weather and famishing cold. . . . We had not gone many steps along the lane before the sun, still invisible to me, sent a glow of gold over some cloud mountains that lay ranged along the eastern sky.

In "Virginibus Puerisque" he may seem at times too opinionative in his matter, too antithetic in his style. He has acquired his mannerisms ; they have not yet been toned down. There is too much of "We need pickles nowadays to make Wednesday's cold mutton please our Friday's appetite." And yet how many memorable phrases there are in these essays, how much just exposure of prejudices, how much suggestion of simple and elemental ideals, of important and fundamental truths. His little essay about "Child's Play" is one of the most charming, and one which shows a singular appreciation of the mind of children. "In the child's world of dim sensation, play is all in all. 'Making be-

lieve' is the gist of his whole life, and he cannot so much as take a walk except in character." "Surely they [children] dwell in a mythological epoch, and are not the contemporaries of their parents. What can they think of them? What can they make of these bearded or petticoated giants who look down upon their games? Who move upon a cloudy Olympus, following unknown designs apart from rational enjoyment?" "They walk in a vain show, and among mists and rainbows; they are passionate after dreams and unconcerned about realities." To children such as these, idealised somewhat, made conscious and self-conscious, Stevenson himself, with his peopled, singing world of fancy, bears no slight resemblance. He goes forward with the assurance, the faith, the essential optimism of a child playing games—who glances up shyly now and again to see if people are looking.

And then there are the later, more seasoned books of Stevenson, such as "Kidnapped," "Across the Plains," "The Master of Ballantrae," "The Wrecker," "The Ebb-tide," and that best of all his books, unfinished, "Weir of Hermiston." In these works the artist knows how to keep himself in the background, though his individuality asserts itself in every page of his own writing.* In all of them he accepts the self-conscious spirit of his time without sacrificing the spirit of romance; in all there

* In two of these books some pages are contributed by his collaborator, Mr. Lloyd Osbourne.

are many dramatic passages wherein the psychological meaning helps forward the purpose of romance. Is it necessary to recall the pathetic generosity of Alan Breck in the duel scene in "Kidnapped," or the Master of Ballantrae poising on the edge of the ship in the presence of his enemy, or the intensity of the auction scene in "The Wrecker," or in "The Ebb-Tide" Herrick trying miserably to drown himself, and failing, or "Mr. Whish" charging the fatalist Attwater with his jar of vitriol?

It was suggested in the first chapter of this work that there are those who will impute to religion what I have imputed to romance. My objection to this way of speaking is, first, that religion generally implies a definite body of dogma; and secondly, that it generally implies a single aspect, and not the whole, of a man's activity. This is why I am somewhat dissatisfied with Mr. Kelman's book entitled "The Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson," wherein, without personal knowledge of the man, and simply judging from his books, he takes a part out of the whole of his life and presents it as his "faith." Now if there is any one for whom this cannot be done, it is, I think, R. L. Stevenson. He would have hated to think that in writing books he had a mission other than literary; he detested the novel with a purpose or the story with a moral. He was a man who, looking upon life from a hundred different portals, was himself a complex of contradictions, and delighted so to regard himself. He

had a sense for the beautiful in every conceivable form, and a singular faculty of reverence; things alive and dead he could invest with a spirituality unseen by less understanding people. Nor was he without kindliness, charity, and a large fund of practical sympathy. But all these elements which go to make up his religion are at the same time his life; and his life was his religion. If Mr. Kelman's book is a life of Stevenson, then it is also his faith; but just so far as it falls short of the one it falls short of the other. The writer himself seems more than half conscious that to separate the two is to divide the indivisible; and yet that is precisely what his book sets out to do. In isolating the limb of an organism he is like Plato's erring artist, who, when he ought to have drawn a face, gave all his efforts to making the eye so beautiful that it ceased to be an eye. Stevenson's faith, as extracted by Mr. Kelman, ceases to be faith.

This sometimes acute critic does not fail to notice what he calls the "subjectivity" in Stevenson's character, and points out how he himself—his experiences, thoughts, and emotions—was supremely interesting to himself. And he shows how the sensuous elements in experience always appealed to him, the thrill of fresh air, the feeling of a murdered man, "the smell of horse-hair on the chair at which he knelt, the jangling church bells, the hard floor that bruised his knees, and the salt taste of tears in his mouth." In all this it is Stevenson who

is feeling, and his characters are really doing what he himself has done or might do. David Balfour suggests the author in his youth; the Master of Ballantrae is woven from the texture of the Scottish romance which filled his earlier years. His style reflects the self-conscious grace of his own character; and for a moment Mr. Kelman is illuminating: "There are times when this faun-like, hardy human element is suddenly revealed. In such times the interplay of flesh and spirit produces an effect of strangeness which for the moment shatters our sense of intimacy with him."

Yet I cannot agree that that "interplay" "shatters our sense of intimacy." If we can but once become intimate with him I think we shall feel that that community of flesh and spirit is the very essence of his romance.

The influence of Stevenson stretches far beyond the circle of his immediate disciples. The atmosphere which he created has communicated itself to the whole race of modern writers and is leaving its mark upon their style, so that already the modes of thought and mannerisms bequeathed by him are beginning to supersede the legacy left by Macaulay and Carlyle. Sometimes we may find a writer whose whole trend of thought is different from Stevenson's, whose training and interests are different, in whose work may be seen again and again the quality which we associate with Stevenson. This does not necessarily mean that he has consciously or

unconsciously imitated him; only that he has caught hold of some sentiment, manner, or viewpoint which has passed from Stevenson into the common air.

This particular note is sometimes touched in the work of Mr. W. J. Locke; only occasionally in "The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne," but often and distinctly in "The Beloved Vagabond." It must not be understood that I am likening the general character of Mr. Locke's work to that of Stevenson's. On the contrary, the differences are far more numerous than the similarities. Mr. Locke writes in a leisurely, parenthetic, deliberative style; Stevenson's language runs and leaps with the musical vigour of a mountain stream. Mr. Locke pays much attention to feminine matters and the "love interest"; Stevenson knew that he was not good at depicting women, and devoted himself as much as possible to masculine interests. Mr. Locke loads his narrative with literary and learned allusions; Stevenson abhorred the academic manner, and for the purposes of presenting life rejected the moral support of the classics.

Yet there is something in the portrayal of Paragot, hero of "The Beloved Vagabond," which recalls the romance of Stevenson—a romance, it must be remembered, which is not a denial of real life but a way of regarding it. Paragot is a mature man of forty who has taken to a quixotic life of vagabondism. He has found out his illusions, without abandoning

his ideals. He has been frustrated in the matters of love and fortune, and continues to believe in the one without regretting the other. He has been an "artist," and has abandoned the profession in order to live the life. "My little Asticot," he says with characteristic egotism to the boy whom he adopts, "I myself was once an artist: now I am a philosopher: it is much better." When he impulsively binds himself to the service of a strolling minstrel, it pleases him to pose as a romantic vagabond, master of his destiny. "Now I know why I was sent into the world. It was to play the fiddle up and down the sunny land of France."

He was fantastic, self-indulgent, wastrel, braggart, what you will; but he had an exaggerated notion of the value of every human soul save his own. . . .

"I am Paragot, my son," he would say, "a film full of wind and wonder, fantasy and folly, driven like thistledown about the world. I do not count. But you, my little Asticot, have the great responsibility before you. It is for you to uplift a corner of the veil of Life and show joy to men and women where they would not have sought it. Work now and gather wisdom, my son, so that when the Great Day comes you may not miss your destiny." And once, he added wistfully—"as I have missed mine."

He refuses to take the boy into the Enchanted Gardens of Aix-les-Bains.

"No. It's a devilish good thing for you to have something your imagination boggles at. Stick to the ideal, my son, and hug the Unexplained. The people who have solved the Riddle of the Universe at fifteen are bowled over by the Enigma of their

cook at fifty. Plug your life as full as it can hold with fantasy and fairy tale, and thank God that your soul is baulked by the Mysteries of the Casinos of Aix-les-Bains."

At another time some one begs him to be reasonable. "Nom de Dieu!" he cried, "if I were reasonable I should be lost." When Asticot complains of the uselessness of the Hungarian tongue, "My son," said he, "the value of a man is often measured by his useless and fantastic attainments."

He is, it must be confessed, a self-indulgent, quixotic *poseur*, extravagant in his jests, grotesque in his sermons, but none the less a real and fascinating person, until the author introduces him to the conventional libertinism of the Quartier Latin and makes him encounter his lost lady love. Then the story falls to pieces; it begins to be stilted and commonplace, for Mr. Locke is not strong enough to keep his face to the harder facts of life without losing the enchantment. Thought, plan and plot begin to obtrude their didactic influence, and the magic of his art is gone.

More important from our present point of view is Mr. Joseph Conrad, who, by birth and in imagination a Pole, endowed with the fiercely romantic instincts of the Slav, can owe but little to the direct influence of Stevenson. He too has come into the modern inheritance, and did we not know that he had reached his point of view independently, we might almost suppose that he had absorbed what Stevenson had to teach and used the knowledge in his own way.

The same critical self-consciousness is present also in him, the remarkable fact being that it occurs in sea-stories and books of adventure. It does not seem strange that the writer on modern society should use the language of the psychologist, but how much more striking that an author like Mr. Conrad, who is dealing largely with *things*—ships, masts, waves, coasts, harbours, skies, &c.—should interpret them, literally, and not merely figuratively, in terms of feeling, and even impute moods and emotions to inanimate objects themselves! Great writers of earlier ages, from Hakluyt to Captain Marryat, described ships and adventures on ships with the joy of romantic description, but without ever attempting to analyse the spiritual meaning of that joy. Herman Melville alone before Stevenson described the sailor's life on the emotional side, showing emotions inspired by, or even felt by, the very things of the sea. All that was implicit in the older romance has become explicit in the new.

Mr. Conrad has in a high degree what is commonly called the power of producing "atmosphere," or, more precisely, the power of making artistically alive the animate and inanimate objects which surround and at the same time move the dramatis personæ. Let us take one of his latest and most successful books, "The Mirror of the Sea," a collection of papers in which he records one after another the numerous moods of sea and ships as he has known them, and their effect upon officers and men. He

is doing here what he did in "Youth," in "Typhoon," and in many parts of "Romance," painting vivid scenes straight from nature in her most intense and subtle manifestations. We may notice how the extremes of the primitive and the highly self-conscious are always tending to meet. The Odysseus of Homer journeyed over a sea where every elemental force was a god; it was the spell of Circe which turned the sailors into swine; it was the hand of Poseidon which upset the hero's raft. Though Mr. Conrad's instinct leads him by a different path, he also is compelled to personify the things of the sea. He is measuring the effect of a ship, a current, or a storm upon the mind and emotions of a sailor; he is seeking to know what message the sea is communicating; and, if only because it communicates, it comes to have all the capricious qualities of a *person*, or of a *god*.

At the outset Mr. Conrad complains of the journalistic degradation of the technical language of the sea, which is an "instrument wrought into perfection by ages of experience, a flawless thing for its purpose." He insists on the right use of nautical phrases, not because he is pedantic, but because every part of a ship, every process of seafaring, has for him a sacred place in the memorable ritual of his craft. And so too the "ship of yesterday" is for him a more romantic thing than the modern steamship, not because it is old, but because its skipper, unable to plough defiantly through winds and waves, had

to study the qualities of his charge, and to think of it as a human being getting the better of its enemy the sea, propitiating the winds and humouring the tides.

The narrative is the least part of this book. Though stories and anecdotes of persons come up in every section, the point of each depends on its effect upon the mind. He speaks of a "dead ship," one that has lost its masts, or its rudder, or its propelling power, and in particular of a certain big steamer which, "dying by a sudden stroke, drifted, an unwieldy corpse, away from the track of other ships." Then comes what is important for him, the psychological effect: "I know that there is no harder trial for a seaman than to feel a dead ship under his feet."

> There is no mistaking that sensation, so dismal, so tormenting and so subtle, so full of unhappiness and unrest. I could imagine no worse eternal punishment for evil seamen who die unrepentant upon the earthly sea than that their souls should be condemned to man the ghosts of disabled ships, drifting for ever across a ghostly and tempestuous ocean.

"Such," we are told, "is the intimacy with which a seaman had to live with his ship of yesterday that his senses were like her senses, that the stress upon his body made him judge of the strain upon the ship's masts." There was a ship that must not be made too stable when she was loaded. There was a ship that "killed a man for every voyage," and at last "made up her mind to kill all

hands at once before leaving the scene of her exploits." There was a yet more thrilling example in the powerful tale of the "Tremolino," of a ship which was deliberately "killed" by her captain, smashed upon a reef.

From telling us of the character of vessels he passes on to speak of individual gales, each of which, as he recalls them, seems to have a personality of its own.

> And this is one of those gales whose memory in after years returns, welcome in dignified austerity, as you would remember with pleasure the noble features of a stranger with whom you crossed swords once in knightly encounter and are never to see again. In this way gales have their physiognomy. You remember them by your own feelings, and no two gales stamp themselves in the same way upon your emotions. Some cling to you in woe-begone misery; others come back fiercely and weirdly, little ghouls bent upon sucking your strength away; others, again, have a catastrophic splendour; some are unvenerated recollections, as of spiteful wild cats clawing at your agonised vitals; others are severe, like a visitation; and one or two rise up draped and mysterious, with an aspect of ominous menace. In each of them there is a characteristic point at which the whole feeling seems contained in one single moment. Thus there is a certain four o'clock in the morning in the confused roar of a black and white world when coming on deck to take charge of my watch I received the instantaneous impression that the ship could not live for another hour in such a raging sea.

The Winds, too, have chapters to themselves. There is a chapter of almost Homeric splendour in which he tells of the West Wind, who "keeps faith with his brother, the King of the Easterly Weather.'

I have chosen "The Mirror of the Sea" for discussion because in this book the author, untrammelled by the necessities of plot, has left himself free opportunity for painting in bold, splendid colours the series of emotional experiences, the meaning which the sea, in its luminous and its baffling aspects, reveals only to the mind of the artist. The style is adequate to the subject, dignified, picturesque, forceful, the sentences drawn out like solid, compact waves, or short, with the sledge-hammer force of breakers. Above all, it must be noted that Mr. Conrad is not a mere "descriptive writer." He is an originator in that he has learnt to apply the modern spirit of self-consciousness to the panorama of nature.

We may wonder if there is not much significance in the fact that the primitive and the highly self-conscious should, not by artistic design, but in the natural evolution of art, appear to meet; that human nature, starting with a belief in the personal forces in nature, the gods and the demons fashioned like themselves, should journey through the intellectual mazes of dogmatism, scepticism, materialism, and at length arrive again at a belief in those personal forces, those gods fashioned like themselves. In these two extremes we see the same results achieved, in the one case by simple belief, in the other case by the highly developed faculty of perception. The idea forces itself upon us that our civilisation so far from being very old is really in its

infancy; that the combined knowledge of all men is at present so slight that it has merely served to confuse us; but that as it becomes more perfect it may both restore to us our faculties of perception and make them keener and finer.

CHAPTER XV

THE BORDERLANDERS

"WHO can think that either Science or Revelation has spoken as yet more than a first half-comprehended word?" says Frederic Myers, the great pioneer of that new science which touches so closely what has here been called the new Romance. I have tried to show how science, claiming to exhaust the whole field of human knowledge, has starved some of the instincts and faculties of men; how the modern self-consciousness has brought us face to face with our limits and shortcomings, exposing to us the folly of human wisdom. Then suddenly we have stumbled upon a literature which gives us the old thrill of romance without seeking to wean us from the modern habit of mind. Just as many of us were lamenting that a glory has passed from the earth, a few men have appeared on the scene to make us give thanks

> For those obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things,
> Fallings from us, vanishings;
> Blank misgivings of a creature
> Moving about in worlds not realized,
> High instincts, before which our mortal nature
> Did tremble like a guilty thing surprized.

Just now we were complaining that there is too much consciousness in the modern man, a too disillusioning knowledge of the "Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves." Now we begin to suspect that we have not enough; that we have turned it all too much in one direction till we are distorted and cramped, and blinded because of the unaccustomed light.

Stevenson instinctively, because of his genius, found a new channel for literature through the shoals of a scientific age. But what he found from instinct others, guided by the unsatisfied craving of the modern mind, have been aiming at deliberately and with fixed philosophic purpose. Hitherto I have used somewhat loosely the word "border," the line which marks off the visible, sensible world from that vague sphere whence and whither all our imaginings, ideals and dreams of perfectibility seem to pass. But the word has been given a technical meaning by psychologists, who wished to distinguish between different kinds of consciousness which have been found actually to exist in the human personality. No student of psychology has studied this question more fully than the late Frederic Myers; none has with more satisfactory results used the experimental methods of science with a view to breaking through its conventional limits. To explain the meaning of "borderland" I cannot do better than quote the words of this distinguished scientist, and beg the reader to remember that they express the opinion of

one who has made a life-work of examining occult phenomena, amassing evidence, and submitting it to the most rigid tests of exclusion and verification.

The idea of a *threshold* (*limen*, *Schwelle*), of consciousness; of a level above which sensation or thought must rise before it can enter into our conscious life;—is a simple and familiar one. The word *subliminal*,—meaning "beneath that threshold,"—has already been used to define those sensations which are too feeble to be individually recognised. I propose to extend the meaning of the term, so as to make it cover *all* that takes place beneath the ordinary threshold, or say, if preferred, outside the ordinary margin of consciousness;—not only those faint stimulations whose very faintness keeps them submerged, but much else which psychology as yet scarcely recognises; sensations, thoughts, emotions, which may be strong, definite, and independent, but which, by the original constitution of our being seldom emerge into that *supraliminal* current of consciousness which we habitually identify with *ourselves*. Perceiving (as this book will try to show) that these submerged thoughts and emotions possess the characteristics which we associate with conscious life, I feel bound to speak of a *subliminal* or ultra-marginal consciousness,—a consciousness which we shall see, for instance, uttering or writing sentences quite as complex and coherent as the supraliminal consciousness could make them. Perceiving further that this conscious life beneath the threshold or beyond the margin seems to be no discontinuous or intermittent thing; that not only are these isolated subliminal processes comparable with isolated supraliminal processes (as when a problem is solved by some unknown procedure in a dream), but that there also is a continuous subliminal chain of memory (or more chains than one) involving just that kind of individual and persistent revival of old impressions, and response to new ones, which we commonly call a Self,—I find it permissible and convenient to speak of subliminal Selves, or more briefly of a subliminal Self.

It is not my purpose here to enter upon technical questions of psychology, still less of occultism. It is sufficient to show that we have recently had a great scientist who took it as scientifically proved that beyond the ordinary consciousness of man is a mysterious region of conscious being which is a part of himself; that man's soul is always stretching out into this unknown—"I assume in the man a soul which can draw strength and grace from a spiritual Universe, and conversely I assume in the Universe a Spirit accessible and responsive to the soul of man." He tells us that "the time is ripe for a study of unseen things as strenuous and sincere as that which Science has made familiar for the problems of earth," and contemplates with assurance "the first advance of science into the deeper scientific conviction that there is a deathless soul in man." He speaks of genius as "a kind of exalted but undeveloped clairvoyance." If we are to learn to respond to the spiritual world which lies beyond the border, our evolution "must rest upon the education, the disentanglement, of *that* within us mortals which exists in the Invisible, a partaker of the undying world." This is his view of the new science: "I would have Science first sublimed into Philosophy, and then kindled by Religion into a burning flame."

How nearly akin is this Science to what I have called Romance—in the one we see philosophy merging with feeling; in the other, feeling merging with philosophy. Just as we have already seen

modern self-conscious Romance coming round to conclusions about life similar to those of the primitive poet; so we now see the promised wedding of that romantic view of life to the scientific view. The attitudes, the starting-points, it is true, are different; but the goal is the same. For if there is any truth in art, any final validity in science, their final goals must be one and the same.

It must be remembered that we are not dealing with isolated opinions and doctrines in modern life, but seeking to unravel some main threads of thought, some main tendencies in life, revealed through contemporary literature. We have seen that much good writing has been sterile because it failed to satisfy those cravings of human nature which belong to its subliminal side; because a limited scientific spirit has bred in authors the idea that there is nothing beyond the facts of which we are conscious in everyday life. We have now to consider those living writers who have been drawn into a new and deeper mode of both feeling and thinking, who have sought to synthesise the worlds of thought and feeling and to express them in forms of an art which, while intimately in touch with concrete life, does at the same time preserve a constant reference to that mysterious, infinite world discovered in the deepest springs of the soul.

I must speak first of a certain foreign author, because in some of his works he seems in a most singular way to answer the questions we have been

asking. Sometimes, like other writers whom we have discussed, Maurice Maeterlinck becomes the victim of his own philosophic method. For instance in "Joyzelle" he gives us, in what is ostensibly a drama, nothing but abstract ideas, failing to clothe them in flesh and blood, to present them under the sensuous imagery which alone, for us, can call up sympathy and understanding. He adapts for his own philosophic ends the subject of Shakespeare's "Tempest," and presents, instead of characters, mere puppets who move in obedience to universal laws; so that our pity, if it is aroused at all, is not for persons, but for the whole human race subjected to the ruling of inexorable fate. Never for a moment are we made to care for the wooden figures which masquerade as men; never for a moment does the tragedy arouse in us the fear which comes from suspense. We miss the atmosphere of fantastic magic which charms us in Shakespeare's play, and lose in sympathy when the heroine, confronted with trial after trial, betrays no hesitation or weakness, no touch of redeeming frailty in her actions.

In "Monna Vanna" on the other hand we never fail to feel the breathless suspense of the soul-tragedy. The dramatist reveals his power of presenting human persons who commune strangely with their own spirits and examine the souls of their fellows. In one of his "marionettes" Maeterlinck has shown us a party of people, collected in a garden, watching through an open window the silent movements of

a family in trouble. In "Monna Vanna" the characters are alternately the people behind the window and the watchers in the garden; they are all, with the exception of Vanna herself, looking with strained eyes upon the half comprehensible life which they are leading. The chorus of Pisans in the background is speechless; but we are never allowed to forget it.

There is much of the intensity and directness of a Greek play in "Monna Vanna." Guido Colonna in his arrogant passion and his blindness is like Ajax slaughtering the herds of cattle, impelled by some Ate which works his ruin. There is the act of Recognition by which Guido discovers his enemy, the tragic irony by which Vanna's words seem to mean the opposite of what was intended. But in the conclusion there is none of the harmonious restfulness with which the Greek tragedies end, none of the righteous satisfaction in which Shakespeare's plays culminate. The old, tranquil ending of death —that is not modern tragedy. Maeterlinck leaves us to fancy the desolation of Guido, the flight of Vanna with a new-found lover, and fresh possibilities of revenge.

But a more definite expression of Maeterlinck's philosophy is to be found in such books as "L'Intelligence des Fleurs." It is in prose works such as these that his energy has recently been finding its most satisfactory outlet. For although he is a man of imagination who draws upon the experience of an

artist and a lover of nature, the infectious habit of philosophy has lately spoilt him for the proper purposes of drama. But his philosophy is not that of the technical student; it deals with the things and the thoughts which present themselves as important to every one, the things which the schoolmen only fall to discussing at those vital moments when they put aside the student and confront their own hearts.

The central, underlying idea of the essays included with "L'Intelligence des Fleurs" seems to be a despair of *thought* as the vehicle of truth and the guide to action. Philosophy has failed; it is not one whit nearer to a solution of the riddle than it was in Plato's time. It has been capable of suffering change, and re-stating its problems according to the new circumstances in which we live. It is to an accumulated inner experience that we owe a knowledge which cannot be attributed to thought. Such a view as this I take to be implicit in nearly all these essays. Maeterlinck is mainly interested in that elusive quality of the soul which he sometimes calls a "higher instinct," sometimes the "mystic reason" (*raison mystique*). It is something apart from "common sense" on the one hand and "good sense" on the other; it "controls as severely as possible the claims of the imagination, of the feelings, and of all that connects our conscious life with the unconscious and with the unknown forces within and without"; it is the "indeterminate part" of the total reason.

It is this same high faculty which he seems to indicate when he speaks of "the supreme point, the 'egotic' point of our being"; that which is important to us when we think of immortality, which must survive if we are to survive, and is more than memory, intellect, or anything in us we can name. The claim of consciousness becomes meaningless when we press the question of identity. "What can that mirror ever facing itself do, save reflect itself indefinitely and to no purpose?" "There is no other means of escaping from one's consciousness than to deny it, to look upon it as an organic disease of the terrestrial intelligence."

But if there is no knowledge, no certainty, no consciousness even which seems to have any power of enduring, at least there are the glorious possibilities, the senses which we have not yet acquired, the more spacious universes.

N'y a-t-il pas certains moments confus, où, si impitoyablement, si scientifiquement que l'on fasse la part de l'égoisme recherché jusqu'en ses plus lointaines et secrètes sources, il demeure en nous quelque chose d'absolument désinteressé qui goûte le bonheur d'autrui? N'est-il pas également possible que les joies sans but de l'art, la satisfaction calme et pleine où nous plonge la contemplation d'une belle statue, qui ne nous appartient pas, que nous ne reverrons jamais, qui n'excite aucun désir sensuel, qui ne peut nous être d'aucune utilité; n'est-il pas possible que cette satisfaction soit la pâle lueur d'une conscience différente qui filtre à travers une fissure de notre conscience mnémonique?

It is the artist in Maeterlinck who pictures the course of man groping his way in the dark under

the impenetrable shroud of his destiny. Some faint glimmerings there are, some dreams, many apprehensions. Clutch at these uncertain parts of yourself, he says; never deny any atom of experience; cherish your dreams and your fancies, for even if they are not real they cannot be less real than all your other illusions. He bids us consider the man of science who claims to explain the potent laws of nature. Take alone those "gods of war" which our presumptuous age has depersonalised:

Mélinite, dynamite, panclastite, cordite et roburite, lyddite et balistite, spectres indescriptibles, à côté desquels la vieille poudre noire, épouvante de nos pères, la grande foudre même, qui résumait pour nous le geste le plus tragique de la colère divine, semblent des bonnes femmes un peu bavardes, un peu promptes à la gifle, mais presque inoffensives et presque maternelles; personne n'a effleuré le plus superficiel de vos innombrables secrets et le chimiste qui compose votre sommeil, aussi profondément que l'ingénieur ou l'artilleur qui vous réveille, ignore votre nature, votre origine, votre âme, les ressorts de vos élans incalculables et les lois éternelles auxquelles vous obéissez tout à coup. Etes-vous la révolte des choses immémorialement prisonnières? la transfiguration fulgurante de la mort, l'effroyable allégresse du néant qui tressaille, l'éruption de la haine ou l'excès de la joie? Etes vous une forme de vie nouvelle et si ardente qu'elle consume en une seconde la patience de vingt siècles? Etes-vous un éclat de l'énigme des mondes qui trouve une fissure dans les lois de silence qui l'enserrent?

The practical appeal is more insistent than the intellectual. He urges all who are not contented with the present, all who have the courage of their convictions, to have no fear of speedy advance, of

sudden revolution. There are plenty of men who will add to "the immense dead-weight which nature drags along"; who will say that "truth always lies in moderation, in the decent average." It is not for us to fear "lest the fairest towers of former days be insufficiently defended." "Let the others follow blindly the inmost impulse of the power that urges us on; . . . for in all things, because of the call of the earth, we must aim higher than the object at which we aspire." He bids us cherish the hidden impulse which we cannot understand, and see the person behind the thing, the godhead that lies beyond nature and its awful forces. Because we cannot know he urges us to see and feel, gaining what light we can from the intermittent flashes which banish the darkness.

. . . . .

The attempt to bring life into touch with what lies beyond the border of ordinary consciousness is for Maeterlinck the quest of art and philosophy. It is an attempt which characterises what I might call a whole school of modern writers were it not for the fact that each of them, from the nature of the case, belongs to no school, standing a little apart, solitary, out of the great current of modern authorship, an atom bound to his fellows only in that he and they are alike drawn towards one magnetic ideal. They do not constitute a school, though the causes that produced them are the same. And so one shrinks from "classing" them; it

would be impertinent to try and label men whose attitude is one of perpetual relationship with the ideal. At the same time we cannot name as geniuses the writers whom I have still to mention, for they themselves seem to be conscious that their own efforts are tentative, and would be the first to shrink from the high, exacting claims of genius. If we were to take, for example, the case of Mr. Henry Newbolt at his best, we could never be sure that we were not mistaking a measure of our own time for a measure of all time. Nevertheless we may say with certainty of his novel, "The Old Country," that he shows himself powerful in conception, in feeling, in sustained execution; that his sensitive yet firm prose style yields itself to the subtle interplay of thought and feeling.

"What can you do for the generation of the dead; what can you be to them, or they to you?" asks Stephen Bulmer, the young sociologist, who, like Mr. Wells, has distinguished himself in his books on the society of the future, who thanks Heaven that he is "free from the deadwood of the past," having spent most of his life in new countries, where men "did not worship decay, or endow all effete things with divine right and a perpetual pension."

His books had already cleared the way for him with the reading public; they had the singular merit of being readable, and never less humorous than earnest. In other ways he was well fitted for his chosen part: he was young for his thirty-two years,

he had good health and a sufficient fortune, keen observation, a wide and miscellaneous experience, few prejudices, and unusually few encumbering ties, for he had been to none of the ordinary places of education, and of his few near relations not one was known to him by sight. On him, at least, the past had no hold. He saw himself possessed of the rarest of all opportunities, to come as a stranger to his native country, to see her with affection but without blindness, to judge her life and ideas as one who sees results but not processes, which are, he would say, the explanation perhaps, but not the excuse, of failure.

Returning to his native land in the full vigour of his faith, and not without pride in his ignorance of history, Stephen is somewhat at a loss when he finds himself a guest in the country house of Mr. Earnshaw, whose daughter Aubrey he has come to woo. Everything in her life and her father's is based on tradition, and a kind of reincarnation of the past. The avenue which leads down to the lakes and the church, the site of the mediæval house, abandoned by a later generation, the woods and fields, through which passed the old dividing-line between two manors—all these summon up for them the vision of the ancient Marlands who had lived here, with their retainers, their church, and their mediæval conceptions of Church and State. Stephen found that he himself and his philosophy were often jarring elements amid this past which was for ever present. "It is true that God dwells not only in temples made with hands," says Mr. Earnshaw; "but in these, our ancient churches, there is that which no hand can make or unmake:

they are builded less of stones than of memories, and man's highest hope can be nothing if it be not itself a memory." Speaking of science, he says:

"Hitherto it has done but little for the clearing of man's spiritual path, because it has hardly yet recognised the existence of spiritual phenomena at all. It recognises flowers," he continued, pointing to the water-lilies which covered the bay at their feet, "because they are substantial; they appeal to the common senses of all men; they float on water, grow on stalks, and are rooted in mud. But it turns away from our mental experiences, as inconsistently, it seems to me, as though it should refuse to recognise those slender bars of turquoise that you see coming and going upon the water-lilies—mere flashes of momentary light from nowhere."

To Aubrey the great difference in outlook between herself and Stephen seems almost insuperable. He will not bend his mind to her point of view, he will not project himself into that past which is for her indissolubly linked with the present. "It's a pity," a friend says to her, "that you can't just lure him back into the fourteenth century for a time."

"I will," she replied, "if he will come."

So he reads the book in which she has rebuilt the manorial house of five hundred years ago; he goes out into the night under the spell, and finds the world very slightly and almost imperceptibly changing about him. "Here and there in the landscape before him there were unfamiliar aspects, slight changes such as those to be felt rather than seen after a period of absence; and from the

opposite hill the house from which he had come last night had disappeared without a trace, though the avenues and the old walled garden still remained." Quite naturally and simply he goes up to the gateway and courtyard, finding himself an expected guest at the house of Sir Henry Marland, where dwelt his son the Rector and his daughter Aubrey.

Suddenly, at this point, when a single slip or error in style or narrative would only have produced the absurd, Mr. Newbolt seems to create that intense, luminous amosphere and liveness of scene which every one must at some time or other have experienced in dreams. Sir Henry addresses Stephen in the familiar language of courtesy, not asking him whence he has come, or puzzling him by awkward questions, but with the simplicity of speech customary to those who in dreams take for granted things which would seem grotesque in waking moments.

> "You have not quite forgotten Gardenleigh, I hope? It must be twenty years since you were here. You have been a great traveller; we have heard something of your wanderings."

Thus he is plunged into the life of a family who are perplexed by a trouble which befell some of the houses of the fourteenth century. Ralph Tremur had been a lifelong friend of Edmund, Sir Henry's son, who, knowing his friend's goodness of heart and his sincerity, could not give him up, even though he stood a heretic, under the ban of the

Church. Stephen finds himself taking part in the disputes as to the place of the individual under the universal dominance of the Church, as to freedom and authority, protest and submission. He listens while others forecast the future as he had forecast it. He finds himself enthusiastically and passionately entering into the life of that past which he had denounced as dead. "How idle, how academic and hollow seemed the life from which he had come, to which he would one day return. It was here in the backwoods of time that the real work of men was going forward, with sweat of the brow and blistering of hands, with action and agony and endurance in place of talk and speculation."

It is Sir Thomas Browne whom the author quotes in his invocation :

> In Eternity there is no distinction of Tenses.
>
> And in this sense, I say, the World was before the Creation, and at an end before it had a beginning ; and thus was I dead before I was alive : though my grave be England, my dying place was Paradise.

It is with some hesitation that I mention in this connection the name of Lucas Malet, whose latest book, "The Far Horizon," possessed as it is with the consciousness of the horror in modern town life, has much in common with the literature of protest. In the first scene she touches the dominant note of gloom, and from cover to cover there is scarcely any relief till the melancholy solace of the Roman religion carries her protagonist away from the fears

of life. Even the many humorous passages scarcely raise a smile, the persons are so mean and sickly, such paltry miscreations of the human image. And yet her book is of interest to us now, for it presents an example of a man's perpetual effort to find an illuminant in life, something in human conduct which may give it meaning and sanction, romantic or religious; finally she decides, sadly but not unhopefully, in favour of the religious sanction.

There are many questions in the book which make us think of "John Inglesant." We do not, indeed, watch the whole life of a man, but the whole life is there in retrospect. We may see something of Shorthouse's steadfastness of outlook upon the changing panorama of life and death, the same intentness upon the discovery of truth, and the direction of life in accordance with it. She has the same habit of observing the minutiæ of thought and feeling, keeping always in view the religious issues which loom on "the far horizon." Yet we miss that flower-like sweetness which gave charm to each sentence and paragraph from the author of "John Inglesant." There are instead constant touches of realism, the uglinesses of which are not resolved into harmony by brooding and introspection.

Dominic Iglesias is well over fifty years of age. His early manhood had been sacrificed in tender devotion to a mother who for many years was insane. His worldly ambitions had been laid aside, and he had been content to pass his life as a clerk

in a bank, and was now perforce retiring, superannuated. On his way home to the lodging-house in Trimmer's Green he soliloquises:

> Unluckily there is no rag-and-bottle shop where superannuated bank clerks of five-and-fifty have even the very modest market value of scrap-iron! . . . Of all kinds of uselessness, that of we godlike human beings is the most utterly obvious when our working day is past. Mental decay and bodily corruption as the ultimate. And, this side of it, a few years of increasing degradation, a mere senseless killing of time until the very unpleasing goal is reached—along with a growing selfishness, and narrowness of outlook; along, possibly, with some development of senile sensuality, the more detestable because it lacks the provocations of hot blood.

How should he amuse himself, he who had never learnt the lighter arts of life? Over the square at Trimmer's Green lived his fussy little friend, George Lovegrove, and his wife, who was very proud of being "at home" once a week and occasionally entertaining the Vicar. Here in his boarding-house were several easily pleased youths and damsels of the class which frequents such institutions. He saw in the Lovegroves "merely specimens, though good ones, of the great majority of the British public, a public so overlaid and permeated by convention, so parochial in outlook, so hide-bound by social tradition and insular prejudice, that it is really less in touch with everlasting fact than the animals it pets, demoralises, and eats."

We must not here discuss the details of the plot. It is not very elaborate, and not quite satisfying;

but it provides the pegs upon which Iglesias's mental and emotional experience turns. His spirit is wakening to the actualities of supernatural religion, the crossing of that "dark immensity of space which appears to interpose between Almighty God and the mind of man." Whilst the Boer war is supposed to be progressing he sees "London, the monstrous mother, in this hour of her rejoicing, showing singularly unattractive." He begins to hate Protestantism and something much worse than Protestantism :

> But this worship of the pseudo-sciences, this tinkering at the accepted foundations and accepted decencies of the social order, this cultivation of intellectual and moral chaos, could, for the vast majority of its professors at all events, eventuate only in the mad-house. And to the mad-house, whether by twentieth-century esoteric airship or occult subway, Dominic Iglesias had not the very smallest desire to go.
>
> For he had no ambition to be "on time" and up to date, to electrify either himself or his contemporaries by an exhibition of mental smartness. He merely desired, earnestly yet humbly, to be given grace to find the road—however archaic in the eyes of the modern world that road might be—which leads to the light on the far horizon and beyond to the presence of God.

We do not feel satisfied, logically or æsthetically, by the concluding scene—death in the arms of the Catholic Church. Such an ending to Dominic's trials and perplexities seems to imply some shirking of the difficulties. The gloom is hardly dispelled, the book is not made less sad, the sordidness of London and England is made no less fearful by the unconditional surrender of Dominic's soul. That

is where Lucas Malet's work breaks down. She contrives to keep the ideal steadily before her, to work towards it through difficulties, but when her persons are on the point of grasping it it has already faded into a conventional commonplace.

Not so in the work of Mr. John Galsworthy. That still developing novelist does not altogether belong to the class of writers of whom I am speaking, but there are points of community which make it well to mention him here. As I have already said, we must not speak too precisely of a "class," for at the most we cannot expect to find more than a few common traits revealing a certain attitude towards the ideal; but it is this attitude which gives seriousness to the clever work of Mr. Galsworthy. Let us take the second of his widely recognised books, "The Country House." Completely modern as he is, the author shows there that he has known how to give vigour to that modernity by retaining something of the light satire and easy nonchalance of earlier writers. No author of the twentieth century can be wholly free from reflective bitterness like the authors of "Joseph Andrews" and "Tristram Shandy"—unless, that is to say, he is one of the votaries of a blind and shallow optimism. Fielding and Sterne satirised individuals and social types, but they did not laugh or weep at the fundamental conceptions of society—they were a part of it, they hardly thought of it. Mr. Galsworthy, on the other hand, though presumably a

member of the society he is here describing, is bound to put himself intellectually outside it. He has inherited the new traditions of self-consciousness which have come from the modern philosophers, poets and novelists, which have left their full, bitter fruit to the modern generation. And so he is not so much pointing the finger of criticism at the squire, the parson, the man-about-town, and the fast woman, as at the society which presupposes them all, and its outworn creed—at the old system, stretched to bursting point, with the jars, the incongruities, the new wine in the old bottles.

He introduces us with much gentle and subtle humour to the well-bred company assembled at the country house of a squire of the old-fashioned type. He depicts them as they talk at dinner, as they assemble at breakfast, as they go out to shoot, some of them agreeable, none of them intellectual, but each with his own characteristics and interests. And though he describes them in so nice and unassertive a manner, the mere whimsicality of his treatment serves to suggest the portentous and less agreeable problems of the mighty world of which they know nothing. They do not even indulge in epigrams like the persons in most of Mr. Meredith's books. There is not one really clever person among them to indulge in sweeping statements about life or literature. The novelist is kept in the background, and real life is pushed to the fore. The Squire goes on talking in his polite yet dogmatic manner. He

talks a little dully about Tory-communism, individualist that he is. He is conscientious, high-minded, conventional, and as narrow as the "system" on which he has been brought up.

It is the Squire's wife, Margery, Mrs. Pendyce, who most of all supplies the softer and deeper elements in this story. She herself, a Totteridge, not a Pendyce, by birth and temperament, prefers persons to creeds, is quick to sympathise with the impulses which lead to action, and to pardon the faults which appear. As by degrees the story comes to acquire a deeper significance she compels more of our attention, and becomes a woman to be respected and loved. For we are made to feel her powers of womanly sympathy and tolerance, her fineness and underlying strength of character. It is she who speaks kindly and simply about Helen Bellew, the beautiful, impulsive, somewhat sensuous woman, who lives apart from her drunken, neglectful husband. It is she to whom that other gentle character, her unpractical cousin Gregory Vigil, who conducts a Society for the Rescue of Women and Children, comes to confer about his work. She sympathises with his desire to get a divorce for Helen Bellew, whom he secretly loves in his well-disciplined way. But she is unwise in mentioning the matter to the Rector, who does not believe in modern ideas about divorce, and when defied by Gregory, urges Bellew to be beforehand with his wife. Hence the source of a terrible, pride-shattering grief to the Squire

when he hears that Bellew proposes to institute divorce proceedings, making his eldest son, George Pendyce, the co-respondent.

It is she, Margery Pendyce, who rushes to London to seek out her son and Helen Bellew ; and it is she who goes to Helen's drunken husband, though the Squire will not so much as answer his letter. She finds him in his own house.

"Please forgive me for speaking. Your wife has given my son up, Captain Bellew ! "

Bellew did not move.

"She does not love him ; she told me so herself ! He will never see her again ! "

How hateful, how horrible, how odious !

And still Bellew did not speak, but stood devouring her with his little eyes ; and how long this went on she could not tell.

He turned his back suddenly, and leaned against the mantelpiece.

Mrs. Pendyce passed her hand over her brow to get rid of a feeling of unreality.

"That is all," she said.

Her voice sounded to herself unlike her own.

"If that is really all," she thought. "I suppose I must get up and go ! " And it flashed through her mind : "My poor dress will be ruined ! "

Bellew turned round.

"Will you have some tea ? "

Mrs. Pendyce smiled a pale little smile.

"No, thank you ; I don't think I could drink any tea."

"I wrote a letter to your husband."

"Yes."

"He didn't answer it."

"No."

Therefore Bellew abandons the suit against his wife and Pendyce's son. And so ends a story in which Mr. Galsworthy convinces, by his eloquent restraint, by his willingness to let his characters develop in the simple, unobtrusive way of real life. The tragedy seems to die away, and in this very fact is some of the tragedy of the life he depicts. Into the humdrum routine of a circumscribed way of life the new world breaks in, the passion flares up, but it sinks to rest, and we may imagine more humdrum days, the pitiful amenities, and aching, unsatisfied hearts.

Here indeed we have an example of " realism " in the sense of the term adopted by the neo-critics. But it is not the unsparing, often sordid, realism of Zola or Gorki. It is realistic only in that it takes its cue from the ordinary, unalterable course of real life, that it reflects with fidelity the sombre and the lighter shades of colour, that it does not even shrink from the terrible, unbeautiful reality of the monotone. If it should be objected that it is confusing to mention Mr. Galsworthy along with Frederic Myers, Maeterlinck, and Mr. Henry Newbolt, I have to urge in reply what I have already urged, that it is often well to put aside the technical differences by which we divide school from school and author from author, and fix our attention on the no less essential points of community. If we approach Mr. Galsworthy's novel from this standpoint, I think we shall see how at the rare moments his pictures

are illumined by the *raison mystique* of which Maeterlinck speaks, the power which makes us wonder and *perceive* in spite of the dulling influences of our pragmatic society, the influences which ordinarily produce the purely common-sense point of view. Take a single line from the passage already quoted—"And it flashed through her mind: 'My poor dress will be ruined!'" A sentence such as that lets in a flood of light from we know not what source; it touches us in some hidden part of our spiritual organism, dragging to the surface faculties which everyday life too seldom calls into play.

It must be remembered that I am not speaking of something new in modern art, but a new manifestation of something which has existed in all art. The reason why it needs to be thus newly manifested is that all the obvious tendencies of modern life are against it. The old words in a modern setting would no longer have the same æsthetic value; all that is deadening in our present social consciousness has to be reckoned with. How often are we told by the supporters of the Celtic revival that we ought to welcome the fresh, unspoilt languages of Ireland and Wales because our own English tongue has been so far universalised that it is unresponsive to the individual mood. Well, that is what the modern English writer has to contend against. He has to breathe life and freshness into dead bones. And so far as we can see, the few authors who are doing this with success have gained their spiritual freshness by

a direct, conscious appeal to the inexhaustible stock of emotions which lie beneath the border. They cannot be content, like the decadents, to play ghoulishly among the tombs; or like the rebels, to spend their time in querulous protests; or like the fugitives, to fly in their disgust to more congenial climes of the imagination. They know too that there is a danger in what is called mysticism, that by playing with fiery symbols we may lose our hold on all that securely binds us to our friends, ourselves and our whole world. This they dare not part with. It is the one sure thing, the one thing sacred, and yet, taken by itself, it is dreary, and only provisionally true. Their search is for something which must be neither untrue nor dreary. They seem to be confronted with dead facts, dead thoughts, and a dead language, yet they have to put into this the movement as of fresh wind touching the body of youth. They have to show that this great modern body is not really dead, perchance that it is only enduring some ailment of adolescence from which it will arise with the added strength of experience and wisdom.

"Fantastic," we may be told, "untrue! Literature will go on as it always has gone on." But surely not so; literature never has gone on treading old tracks. Amid the primitive and sometimes tumultuous changes of society, it is only in so far as it can shake, and twist and re-mould itself to satisfy and express new ideals that it can hope still to hold

and inspire. A sinister revolution has been creeping, at first slowly and surely, lately by leaps and bounds, over the organism of English society. Greater demands are put upon literature: it cannot meet the ingenious challenge of materialism unless it can find a new and more compelling way of expressing the ideal.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PERSONAL NOTE IN CRITICISM

EVERY one must have noticed how serious discussions among friends, no matter what the subject of debate, no matter how abstract its nature, are wont to end in some personal application. "What have we to do with these things?" some one asks with an air of irrelevance; "How do they really affect us?" And then the talkers cease from the solemn weighing of *pros* and *cons* and the adducing of technical evidence, and declare with the conviction of prejudice what it is that really matters for them.

The same naïve spirit is sometimes shown in the vast arena of literary criticism. But in this case each stage of the discussion falls to a different set of men. First there are those who are busily engaged in collecting facts, sorting evidence, and stating conclusions; secondly, those who are occupied in affirming great general principles, and applying them methodically to particular works. The final stage of the discussion falls to a third kind of critic, who generally shrinks from calling himself a critic at all. He is apt to speak in this vein: "I know everything has been said about Thomas Smith that

can be said; I know that all the available facts of his life have been brought together and perfectly adjusted; and that his works have been edited so that we can now read him in the best possible text. I know also that the objects of his life, the principles of his art, and his influence upon his contemporaries, to say nothing of his final place in literature, have all been determined with unerring precision. In fact there is nothing about him which remains unknown, excepting one thing—how he happens to affect me. But as that is something quite different from anything that any one has ever mentioned, and to me it seems the one thing about him which matters, I propose to write a book on the subject."

It was suggested in an early part of this work that the introspective habit of modern writers, the tendency to look upon their own emotions and to reveal them, has led to an intensely personal quality in criticism as well as in art, and sometimes to a contemptuous deviation from fixed artistic standards. There is no dogma about art from which some reputable critic does not dissent; there is probably no masterpiece in literature which does not bore and even irritate some person usually sensitive to literary charm. The author, the critic, and the general reader, confronted with an ever-growing range of interests and accessible books, are thrown back upon themselves and the tastes which individual circumstances, and not general principles, have created in them. Literary *values* have altered. There was a

time when a book would be weighed and precisely assessed in the formal, quasi-technical language of elegant literary circles—the only circles in which books were read. Fanny Burney would quote the formal approval or disapproval of Dr. Johnson; Mrs. Vesey would quote Mrs. Montagu; all would quote some traditional phrase of Pope or Addison; and when once the little world of readers was supposed to have made up its mind it was heresy or ignorance to disagree. At the present day, on the contrary, there is a flood of conflicting opinions, not as of old upon theology, but upon literature and all the arts. *Quot homines, tot sententiæ.* The more unorthodox the opinion, the more "original" and "clever" it is held to be. There is no aspect of truth too one-sided, no paradox too startling, to win the applause of a proudly divided multitude. And the reason of this change is that literature has been democratised; it has been disseminated among widely differing classes of the community, the majority of which care for books just so far as they prove agreeable to the individual tastes of themselves the readers. And this tendency, starting among uneducated, informal readers, has spread upwards to the educated and even the learned. The literary values have altered, so that most people no longer ask whether this or that work conforms to the standards set up by the classics of the language, but whether it stimulates them as individuals, whether it finds a response in their own possibly mis-shapen

emotional fabric—whether, in fact, it *matters* to them.

It is this modern spirit of rebellion against authority—often an exaggerated and fanatical spirit—which makes critics of the old school declare that the British public has lost its capacity of appreciation, its standards, its sensitiveness to form. The truth of this indictment cannot be entirely denied, but it should be borne in mind that we are passing through a period of transition which seems to promise compensations. In a recent article in the *Albany Review* Mr. Edward Carpenter pointed out the transitional character of that phase of morality which passes muster to-day; the old religious tenets which we profess to hold, the moral shibboleths which we still pronounce, the whole ethical code upon which society is supposed to be based, all are inadequate to real *goodness* of life and conduct. The time has come, he seems to say, when the just man should abandon childish codes and live according to the justice of his own ideals. And can we not see a similar evolution in the feeling for things beautiful? Just as authority has been undermined in religion and morals, so too in art. The old accepted standards cannot satisfy a changing age, wherein the individual searches on all sides for some means of self-expression, no matter what it is, if only he can convince the world of that atom of truth for which he stands.

The Americans were probably the first to empha-

sise the importance of this personal, subjective quality in literature. It was natural for Emerson to admire the "fervent mystic, prophesying half-insane under the infinitude of his thought," words which at once recall his contemporary in England, Thomas Carlyle. Walt Whitman's whole being was a protest against authority, formalism, ornament, embroidery, and a passionate affirmation of "the fibre of things" and "inherent men and women."

Let me have my own way,
Let others promulge the laws, I will make no account of the laws.

. . . . .

Let others finish specimens, I never finish specimens,
I start them by exhaustless laws as Nature does, fresh and modern continually.
I give nothing as duties,
What others give as duties I give as living impulses
(Shall I give the heart's action as a duty?)

In more recent years this right of egotism has been recognised even in literary criticism, which in America has never been dominated by Matthew Arnold. "The crying want always is for new, fresh power to break up the old verdicts and opinions, and set all afloat again," says Mr. John Burroughs, in a book called "Literary Values." "The poets are not to be analysed, they are to be enjoyed; they are not to be studied, but to be loved; they are not for knowledge, but for culture—to enhance our appreciation of life and our mastery over its elements." For him rules and principles and canons have no place in art.

He attaches no value to the study of words, the anxious care for phrase and rhythm, the conscious effort to attain style ; all, in fact, that Walter Pater so applauds in Flaubert, " the one martyr to style," is for him a vainglorious attempt to obscure the all-important personality which lies behind and illuminates the written words. It seems that he would make all art subjective, a direct appeal from the imaginative atmosphere of the author's mind to that of the reader. What he cares for is not so much the reasoning or the truth contained in the written words as " the quality of mind or spirit that warms the words and shines through them." " In all true literature something more than mind and erudition speaks—a man speaks ; a vital personality is imminent—a Charles Lamb, a Wordsworth, a Carlyle, a Huxley, an Emerson, a Thoreau, a Lowell —all distinct types of intelligence speaking through character." Thus he finds that the style and the man are literally one ; that every person is a critic judging by the standard of his own temperament—only the faculty may be more or less delicate, it may cover a wider or a narrower range of emotions. This does not mean that he fails to appreciate *quality* in style, but he speaks of it as " the one thing in life that cannot be analysed, the one thing in art that cannot be imitated."

He believes that the time has come when the democratic spirit is manifesting itself in literature—not " the loud, the vulgar, the cheap and mere-

tricious," but the opposite of that superfine excellence, the spirit of aloofness, which appears, for instance, in Matthew Arnold.

> The bewitching, the delusive, the unreasoning, pathetic time of youth is past. . . . The extrinsic, the put on, the ornamental, the factitious, count for less and less ; theology, metaphysics, the sacredness of priests, the divinity of kings, count for less and less, while the real, the true, the essential, in all fields, count for more. It is doubtful if art for art's sake can ever be in the future what it has been in the past. We are too deeply absorbed in the reality ; we care less and less for the symbol and more and more for the symbolised.

He looks for a poetic representation of industrial life, of ships, of machinery, and even of that "blotch upon the earth," the railroad ; the hideous parts of modern life will be blended into art as "Dante made poetry out of hell."

In England, too, we find a host of critics who declare that literature is only admirable just in so far as it calls forth a personal response in the reader. The late Canon Ainger was one of these. He was wont to brush aside that minute sort of scholarship which for him had no attraction, and to concern himself only with the broad, humane issues. "It is our own love for and interest in any author," he says, "that first sets us watching him and his changes for ourselves. It is love and interest that open our own eyes to see." Most critics who make no claim to the detachment demanded by Matthew Arnold, and frankly adopt a personal standard, have given their freshest thoughts to some one or two masters,

and have used them as a touchstone in the reading of other literature. Canon Ainger was permeated with the humanity of Shakespeare and the age of Shakespeare; and though with his wide sympathies he shows himself a suggestive critic of such diverse writers as Swift, Cowper, Burns, Scott, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Dickens and even such modern writers as Mr. Stephen Phillips, we all the time find him dominated by the conclusions derived from the reading of Shakespeare, and that human interpreter of Shakespeare, Charles Lamb. It is only in this personal sense that, for him, the whole of literature stands together, a sequence, the parts illustrating the whole, the thoughts and methods of one great writer suggesting the thoughts and methods of another.

He approaches literature without attempting to depersonalise himself—that is to say, he allows full play to his own interests, sympathies, predilections, and bias. He has a perspective, and it is as seen under that perspective that men and books have value for him. Just as Mr. Burroughs looks for a certain "*quality* in style," so Canon Ainger looks for a certain "charm" which is for him another name for "ethical beauty." He is drawn to the Elizabethan because he finds in him the finest and sincerest expression of the human and moral facts of life. Great literature, he contends, is seldom or never lacking in moral content, "moral" implying everything belonging to humanity and the human

sympathies. Thus, as he traces Shakespeare's art through three periods, fancifully described as its spring, summer, and autumn, he shows how there was a gradual ripening of the human sympathies, of wisdom, and even of "goodness." He takes the instance of Shylock, hitherto represented on the stage as a stock character, a comical, contempible, clown-like creature, and points out "how the humanity of the poet overruled another of the conventions, not merely artistic, of his time, and how the truer humorous sense of the poet destroyed the lower and poorer." He does not care to ask, "What passage in Shakespeare shows the *veritable* Shakespeare?" but prefers to notice "the writer's own changes in style, in subject, and lastly in *tone*." And again, when he asks, "What is this *flavour* that Shakespeare leaves upon the palate? Whether it be comedy or tragedy with which he is dealing, whether the interest be serious or pathetic, or whether it be fantastic and humorous?" he answers:

> I think we must admit that the flavour has to do with moral sweetness and beauty rather than with any intellectual and æsthetic attractiveness—supposing that we can safely separate these things from each other; and this moral beauty one connected with the fates and fortunes of the various personages, as originating with and controlled by their respective characters, or the characters of those surrounding them.

It is not that he delights in that crude form of moral-mongering by which Dickens, for instance, loved to get his hero converted at hearing the clock

strike ten. He does not want "sudden conversions" or the "piling on of the agony," but, as he quotes from Lamb, "to move a horror skilfully, to touch a soul to the quick, to lay upon fear as much as it can bear, to wear and weary life till it is ready to drop, and then step in with mortal instruments."

And so, as he passes through the range of literature, he is still bringing the same touchstone to bear. He finds that Mr. Stephen Phillips is lacking in "charm," because he has not this fine sympathy, because his people do not utter reflections from life. Lamb, on the other hand, has this great critical quality. And it is the same even when he comes to such general questions as "True and False Humour," or "Books and their Uses." "Books are killing literature," he cries; and cites Wordsworth's dictum, "Numbers overwhelm humanity." It is "the humanity in humour that makrs it as true." He complains of George Eliot that her humour is not real humour, because she stands "rather *above* than by the side of the vulgar and ignorant she is describing"; she is sarcastic and contemptuous rather than sympathetic with nature. The picture of the parish clerk remarking, "When me and the Parson does the cursing on a Ash Wednesday," is stigmatised as grotesque, and raising a laugh, "but it lacks the vital element of humour—fidelity to nature."

Canon Ainger's view is, of course, a "view"; it is a theory as to "charm" in literature which, consciously and unconsciously, colours all his criticism.

There are many paths by which art may be approached ; and his value as a critic seems to lie in this, that he points out an avenue of approach for people of like temperament with himself, telling them what beauties they may look for by the way, what trees and flowers flourish on the right and on the left, from what points one may catch the broader majesty of landscape. And it lies also in this, that he may stimulate those who are not like himself, just as the contact of mind with mind wakens latent faculties, and draws men out of themselves into a juster appreciation of life.

Professor Raleigh's little book on Shakespeare affords a remarkable instance of the application of this personal standard in criticism—all the more remarkable because he has for long been surrounded by that University atmosphere which in its most recent phases tends to promote pedantic orthodoxy in questions of taste. It is not without disdain that he sweeps away the mass of academic cobwebs that have clustered round the study of Shakespeare, seeking to bring us back to an older, simpler, more natural way of appreciating the first of English dramatists. Where Mr. Sidney Lee has given us authentic facts, and possibly a little more, Professor Raleigh gives us what he conceives to be the spirit, sense, and essence of Shakespeare freed from the dry bones of controversy. He seeks to judge the poet from direct evidences as we might judge a man by his letters, not forgetting the facts of his age which

compelled him to be what he was and to write as he wrote. Seeing the nature of the man not in his biography but in his work, he has managed to give a peculiarly sensitive and intimate presentment of him, seizing upon those hints and distinctive ideas which can hardly fail to betray temperament. We may not be able to learn, he says, how Shakespeare "wore his hat, or what were his idiosyncrasies of speech," but "he has made us acquainted with all that he sees and all that he feels, he has spread out before us the scroll that contains his interpretation of the world—how dare we complain that he has hidden himself from our knowledge?" "Plays like those of Shakespeare cannot be written in cold blood; they call forth the man's whole energies, and take toll of the last farthing of his wealth of sympathy and experience." And so, though we cannot "argue backwards and recreate his personal history," there are many things that we may infer about his character; for instance, "that he had the art of giving himself wholly to his company, and accommodating himself to every new scene." "The tradition of geniality clings to his name like a faded perfume. Every one was more himself for being in the presence of Shakespeare." And we may be sure also that "the central drama of his mind is the tragedy of the life of imagination."

He knew the anguish of the divided mind, and had suffered from the tyranny of the imagination. It can hardly be said that he was over-balanced by his imaginative powers; they were all

needed for his matchless achievement, and it was by their most potent aid that he won through, in the end, to peace and security. But no one can read his plays and not feel the fierce strain that they put upon him.

A great fact which the author insists upon again and again in this book is that Shakespeare did not think of himself as writing for all time; he was writing for the Elizabethans; he took the trouble to accommodate himself to the requirements of the theatre, to the spirit of his audience, to the limitations of a comparatively primitive and in some ways barbarous age. And yet, while studying to satisfy expectations, he could not forget the other aim. "His own vision of poetic beauty and his own interpretation of human life are to be set forth under these rigid conditions and conventions." And it is just in this that Shakespeare achieved his supreme triumph—as Professor Raleigh says finely and significantly: "The audience asked for bloodshed, and he gave them 'Hamlet.' They asked for foolery, and he gave them 'King Lear.'"

To follow the author through his analysis of Shakespeare's literary methods, his plots, his characteristics, his comedy and tragedy: to see how he accounts for the carelessness which is "a part of his magnanimity," for the improbable hypotheses which were in the stories presented to him, and for the manner in which he draws out the central character into a dominant position, often falling in love with the rogues and villains, the Shylocks and

the Falstaffs of the original story: in a word, to read this book and catch the spirit of the author, is to feel that Professor Raleigh, in abandoning the conventional dogmas and approaching his subject from a fresh, individual standpoint, with full knowledge, with sympathy and enthusiasm, has brought Shakespeare home to us better than all the dozens of commentators.

. . . . .

It may be that modern taste is getting too grown-up to go on caring deeply about theories of fine art. When men are very young there is no subject so threadbare that it cannot afford the sweet delights of controversy; the very forms of art and philosophy now for the first time discovered to them seem superhumanly wonderful, for they have not yet pierced the outer rind of experience. Disillusion comes to them later, when they find that the once despised facts and events of life are more intricate and all-engulfing than ever they had supposed. Once they could not be patient when they heard mature men speaking of "experience," which to them seemed only an excuse for feebler instincts and dulled senses. They were content to "tear the heart out of experience" when their own knowledge was limited to the conclusions of others and an inexhaustible store of magnificent passions. And then comes the day when some beautiful thing is arid; some cup of experience drained to the dregs has exposed an illusion in all its follies, and the

dreamer knows that he is one ecstasy the poorer. From that moment there is some complete realm of fancy which has become childish, and before long the whole fabric threatens to fall in ruins.

When that time comes it is surely the supreme test of a man's character. Either he will sink into the satisfactions and petty worries of a gross, commonplace life, where things are measured in terms of their length and breadth, and ideas are the toys of a moment; or, disillusioned as he is, the world will open itself to him more mysterious, more incalculable, claiming a deeper faith and offering sensations fuller though not more joyful. Some of the old forms in which he once delighted will have become trifles, and whole spheres of knowledge irrelevant and unprofitable. Perchance he will have discovered that human beings are more important than human institutions, that a faculty of sympathy is more important than a glorious attitude of chivalry, that death is more important than tragedy, life more important than death, and humour more important than everything.

I do not know whether nations, like individuals, really have a youth, a maturity, and an old age, and betray all the symptoms common to these times of life. If so, the present age seems to have reached that psychological moment which I have spoken of as the supreme test of character, when we either sink into the pragmatic stolidity of middle age or rouse ourselves into a more intense appreciation of

the romance of life. When we see men refusing to pursue the old, worn-out forms of study, and seeking with all the strength that is in them to grasp the gist of things—the personality that has expressed itself in literature, the character of poet, artist, or musician which we are able to see because we too have lived and sympathised—then we may know that the principle of growth is not extinct within us. We see that persons still count more than all else, that even the laws and forces of nature appeal to us like a mysterious language, imperfectly understood it is true, yet uttered by an intelligence and a personal power.

When we are passing final opinions upon people whom we know or have read about, the qualities which count most of all with us are not benevolence, or cleverness, or activity, but those which spring from perception and instinct. How often do we hear the expression, "There is more in him than I had supposed," meaning that there is some quality of insight and of feeling which we cannot explain though we know it belongs to a higher kind of wisdom than that of science or common sense. This even more than the power of reasoning is distinctively a property of human beings, and in proportion as a man has this perceptive faculty developed in him, to that extent he is truly a human being and allied to the gods. Surely it is the quality which we love in human beings, for it is that side of them which reaches out towards the infinite, love being

satisfied with nothing short of infinity. It is that which makes a man potentially one with all that exists in nature and the gods of nature, and other souls stretching out in like manner to embrace the universal spirit are thereby identified with him and with one another in the bond that we call sympathy or affection.

The first, the only, aim of art is self-expression; and if we hold that the genius, so far from being a divine madman, is really a human being with the proper qualities of humanity supremely developed, then the genius must for ever be expressing through the medium of his art—through words, colours, sounds, political deeds—that perceptive part of himself which tends to identify him with all humanity, all nature, and all that there is in a world beyond the flesh. To read his works, if he is a man of letters, is to follow the language he has chosen; to appreciate him is to make his world your own; and to do that is to know him in just such a way as we know the personality of our friends.

If modern literary critics are tending to deal less with words and symbols and more with the things symbolised—with that in things which binds all men together—then they at least cannot be accused of decadence. The effort to put off the conventions of form and rely upon the trained faculty of insight may indeed result in foolish judgments from the foolish, but it will give us wise judgments from the wise. But whatever the result, surely it is good

that a man's wisdom or folly should be his own; that persons should be valued for what they are; and that we should begin to see that nothing in life and nothing in art matters much unless we feel, within it and inspiring it, the breath and spirit of a human person.

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